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An Historical Ethnography of a Rural School Music Program: A Case Study

Robert C. Lacey

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

An Historical Ethnography of a Rural School Music Program: A Case Study

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Every school music program has a history and a culture. This thesis was a study synthesizing those two elements, seeking to explore the past culture of a rural school music program primarily through interviews with former members of this culture. Throughout are examples of how music teachers, music students, administrators, and community members interacted over the course of approximately 30 years. From these interactions, the researcher drew insights about patterns of teacher behavior that could improve or hinder progress in a music program, including the quality of interpersonal relationships, the value of a teacher trying to integrate in a community (especially when it is a small rural community), and the importance of cooperating with other faculty members to share limited resources in a small school.

Keywords: music education, rural school, historical ethnography

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Need for Ethnohistorical Research in Music Education	2
Purpose of this Study.....	3
Research Questions	4
Delimitations of the Study.....	4
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	7
Oral History Research.....	7
Community History Research.....	14
Ethnographic Research.....	17
Ethnomusicological Research	18
Ethnohistorical Research.....	21
Conclusion.....	22
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	23
Principal Sources of Information	23
Protection of Privacy.....	25
Interview and Transcription Equipment.....	26
Interview Procedure	27
Data Processing.....	28

Chapter 4: An Historical Ethnography of a Rural School Music Program: A Case Study	30
Community History.....	30
Early History of Music Education in Dover.....	31
A Brief Chronological Overview of the Study Period	33
Enter Mr. Fenton	35
Pep Band	39
Elementary Band Classes	41
Elementary Music Classes with Rhoda Elliot.....	43
Chorus Classes	45
Band and Choir Concerts and Festivals	46
Mr. Fenton’s Hiatus.....	52
Mr. Clark.....	53
Mr. Speer.....	58
Mr. Fenton’s Return	67
End of the Marching Band	69
Student-Organized Garage Bands	71
Mrs. Higginson’s Musical Involvement in the Community.....	72
Mrs. Higginson’s Return to the Public Schools	79
Orchestra Concerts and Festivals	85
Challenges of a Small Student Population	88

Mr. Fenton’s Final Years	93
Mrs. Higginson’s Final Years at DES	99
Observations about Relationships	102
Mr. Fenton’s Teaching Style	102
Mr. Fenton’s Relationships with Others	108
Mrs. Higginson’s Teaching Style	125
Mrs. Higginson’s Relationships with Others	133
Mr. Fenton and Mrs. Higginson	148
Conclusion	154
Chapter 5: Analysis, Insights, and Personal Applications	155
Why Some Teachers Stayed and Others Left	155
Variety of Class Offerings	165
The Value of Elementary Music Instruction	166
The Importance of Community Visibility and Meeting Community Expectations	167
Extra-Curricular Music Making	169
Expecting Excellence	170
Creating Memorable Feelings and Experiences	172
Helping Students Feel Successful Quickly	173
Importance of Personal Relationships	174
Long-Term and Long-Range Influence of a Good Music Teacher	175

Music for Everyone.....	176
Chapter 6: Reflections and Recommendations.....	180
The Research Process.....	180
The Interview Process.....	181
The Transcription Process.....	185
The Writing Process.....	186
Other Ideas for Future Research.....	187
Appendix A: Interview Forms.....	189
(1) IRB-approved Consent Form.....	189
(2) Sample of Letter Sent to Participants with the Transcript of their Interview.....	191
References.....	192
Oral History Research.....	192
Community History Research.....	192
Ethnography Research.....	192
Ethnomusicology Research.....	193
Ethnohistorical Research.....	193
Other References.....	194

Chapter 1: Introduction

School music programs come in many varieties depending on school size, geographic location, and community preferences. My own experience as a high school student and as an undergraduate prepared me for teaching in the typical suburban school of 1000-2500 students or more in grades 9-12 where a band, choir, and orchestra program are likely already in place. When I entered the workforce, I found myself teaching in a very small rural school system with fewer than 300 students grades K-12. While I initially felt unprepared for this setting, I quickly discovered that the basics of teaching were the same. The small size of the school also made it easy to get to know the students and faculty. However, I discovered that there are certain challenges unique to teaching in a very small community. People in town often compared me to former teachers, some of whom had been out of the music program for ten years or more. I felt that I would always be “the new guy” both at the school and in the community.

As I entered graduate school after two years of teaching in this town, I found myself attracted to the idea of historical research and felt that researching the history of my own rural school system could be particularly interesting and pertinent to my career. Thus was born this study.

Historical research often focuses on names, places, dates, and numbers. As I began plotting how to approach my research, I determined that a study using traditional historical methods would not suffice. I did not want simply to discover the history of my school’s music program. I was more interested in discovering why this particular music program succeeded in some ways but not in others, why some teachers stayed and others left, and how a school with limited resources (both in terms of money and students) managed to sponsor a music program successfully. I suspected that what I discovered would also apply to other schools’ music

programs, and thus could be useful to other researchers in the future. Believing that an ethnographic methodology could be useful, I began to look for pertinent examples; unfortunately, I found that most ethnographic research in music education was focused on the present rather than the past. I was then guided to the ethnohistorical methodology, an approach used in the anthropology field. William Kornblum defined it as “a combination of historical research and retrospective ethnography” (2004, p. 178). He showed it is possible to “reexplore” past cultures that were not sufficiently studied in their own time (p. 177).

I identified some examples of ethnohistories in the education field (e.g., Belcher, 2006; Patterson, 1997) and a few in musicology (e.g., DeNora, 1995; Rahn, 1993), but I could not find any ethnohistories in music education in either Brigham Young University’s extensive catalog or ProQuest’s Theses and Dissertations index. Despite not discovering any precedents, I determined to try this approach, feeling that if I could combine historical research methods with ethnographic methods I could discover some of the answers I was seeking.

Need for Ethnohistorical Research in Music Education

All school music programs, regardless of location, have a cultural history. Past directors, students, administrators, and community members influence the traditions and practices of a program in both obvious and subtle ways. An incoming music educator would be well-served by learning about these traditions and practices to better understand his new place in that culture.

A music teacher coming into a new assignment may find herself walking into a difficult situation she knows nothing about. Local traditions, history, and politics can affect expectations and procedures in a music program, and trying to work against those—whether intentionally or unwittingly—may create challenges for her. It would behoove any new teacher in any school to

do some degree of ethnohistorical research early in her tenure to discover some of the traditions and background of the music program to see how she can best fit into that culture.

Purpose of this Study

The primary purpose of this study was to better understand the cultural history of the music program in the small town in which I teach. I wanted to learn why things were the way they were so that I could build upon what had worked well and avoid the pitfalls of previous eras.

One secondary purpose of this study was to create a published history of this particular program to preserve its somewhat unique heritage.¹ This purpose will have to be delayed because of the sensitive nature of some of the data gathered. Many of the subjects of the research are still alive, and I have no desire to influence their reputations in any way. Some of the participants also presented me with information on condition that it not be allowed to damage the reputations of others who were their friends, most of whom are still living. As such, I have adapted this history into an anonymized case study for the present time. I hope to eventually publish it as a history at some future date after all of the primary subjects are deceased or their permission can be obtained.

Another secondary purpose of this study was to create a model that other music teachers may follow. I found the research process—and particularly the interviews—to be very enjoyable and also very helpful to me. I have found success in adapting my teaching practice based on what I have learned, and I expect other teachers could do the same if they followed a similar methodology.

¹ While I have no evidence to prove this particular music program is especially unique on a broad scale, my personal experience with other similar-sized schools in my area leads me to believe this statement is valid. For example, of the seven like-sized schools in our region, ours is by far the most developed as measured by its variety of course offerings.

A final purpose of this study was to discover whether historical ethnography has a place in the music education field. While I have yet to discover any other examples of its use in the field of music education, I have found it a successful methodology in my case. I hope this project will inspire others to attempt a similar project.

Research Questions

Typical of ethnographic research, I approached my study with few preconceived questions, searching for new questions as I began to explore the subject at hand. As Spradley explained, “Work with informants begins with a naïve ignorance” (1979, p. 29). However, several key questions formed the impetus of the study and remained important throughout:

- Why were some music teachers in my school successful while others struggled?
- Why did some music educators teach in the community for a long time while others only taught here for a short time?
- What did the community expect of its school’s music program, and did those expectations change over time?
- How did successful teachers share the limited number of students with other school programs (e.g., athletics, vocational clubs, etc.)?
- What effects did interpersonal relationships between the music teacher and other teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community members have on the music program?

Delimitations of the Study

I began this study with the idea of researching the historical period from 1941 (the first yearbook I could find for the school) to 2007 (the year before I started teaching at the school). I quickly discovered, though, that while there were people alive who vaguely remembered those

early years, their memories had faded beyond what I could use for my research. Fortunately, I found that memories about a long-time teacher who began teaching in the early 1970s (and who was still alive) were much clearer. The nearly 30 years he taught music at the school (concluding in the late 1990s) made for a logical time period to research. Thus, I will keep most of my discussion to the period between about 1970 and 2000. In addition, I chose to include some discussion of the periods immediately before and after to provide framing for the main study.

There are many individuals in the community I could have interviewed regarding their experiences with the music program and its members, since nearly everyone in town interacted with the music program in some way over the years. While I would have liked to have spoken with all of them, it quickly became apparent that this was not feasible. Consequently, I limited my interviewing to individuals who were particularly important to the program's history or who could best help me understand particular perspectives. To that end, I interviewed:

- former music teachers
- former administrators
- former students, several of whom have gone on to be music teachers or professional musicians themselves
- community members who were particularly involved or interested in the program

I found very little written history available to research. The school yearbooks were available online for the period from 1941-2008 and proved invaluable for establishing the historical timeline. However, those documents provided little more than photos, names, dates, and a few major accomplishments. The school did not have an archive of any other historical information. This is unfortunate because I could not substantiate many of the details beyond

what I could find through interviews. Therefore, some of the historical record I present here is the perspective and opinion of individuals; I have noted these occurrences.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In preparation for this project, I reviewed scholarly literature in several areas to discover effective methodologies and to find writing models that would suit the needs of this project. As I could find no previous examples of ethnohistorical research in the music education field, I searched in a variety of related fields for ideas and inspiration.

Oral History Research

I recognized very early in my planning that I would need to speak directly with many individuals to obtain the necessary information for this ethnohistory. I would need to conduct interviews that would combine traditional oral history methods with ethnographic interviewing methods.

Oral history theory and practice. Prior to this project, I had never conducted an oral history interview. I was encouraged to learn about the methodology before beginning. Lynn Abrams' *Oral History Theory* (2010) provided a theoretical background regarding memory (p. 78), perception of self (p. 35), how narratives work (p. 106), and other psychological concepts important to oral historians. While it was definitely not a how-to book, she did include some ideas about how to apply the theories at the end of each chapter.

In *Oral History and the Local Historian* (1994) Stephen Caunce described, among other things, the broad usefulness of oral histories in a variety of research fields (p. 3). Throughout the book, he used examples of oral histories from a wide variety of backgrounds. This confirmed to me that oral history techniques could work well in my study.

Caunce also included a section on "Alternative History" where he discussed the importance and possible impact of oral histories by minorities and under-studied groups on local histories (pp. 66-85). I applied this as I sought out participants, seeking not only the well-known

and well-respected members of the community and music education tradition, but also former students who may not have been very successful in class. I also sought out former music teachers who taught here for only a short time.

Donald Ritchie's *Doing Oral History* (1995) proved to be a very useful source for my project, mostly because of the range of topics discussed in a condensed, readable style. His ideas about the importance and limitations of memory were especially helpful. He suggested that participants often remember what they think is important, not necessarily what the interviewer thinks is important (p. 32). I often found this to be the case, especially regarding day-to-day details of the inner workings of the music program. Few participants could recall those kinds of details except for two who are now music teachers themselves.

Ritchie suggested that the distance from and perspective regarding a past event gives oral history interviews more depth than interviews done closer to an important event (1995, p. 39-40). I found the same regarding one highly-respected teacher: participants' comments about her that were recorded during interviews while she was still living and shortly after her death tended to be very glowing, while comments about her gleaned from later interviews seemed to present a more complete picture.

Ritchie also showed how complicated memories can get, especially when they concern people or events that many people may have discussed. His quotation from Danny Arce, a worker at the Texas Book Depository in Dallas, Texas, who was present at the assassination of President Kennedy, summarized the situation perfectly:

I have read and heard so many things, it mixes together. You don't know if it's your own memory or it's somebody else's. We all read a lot of things, and sometimes inadvertently adopt things we heard from others. It's hard to separate the two, and can get real

confusing trying to figure out what you remember without having your memory colored by everything that has come out. (1994, p. 105).

While the subject of my research did not approach the magnitude of that tragic event, I did find his comments to be true. Participants sometimes had a hard time keeping track of what they had actually experienced and what they had experienced vicariously through a neighbor or child.

Abrams said that while this can be problematic, it can also be interesting for the researcher, who should find the process of how the “infection” occurs to be of interest (2010, p. 23).

Willa Baum wrote two useful and practical guides regarding oral historiography:

Transcribing and Editing Oral History (1977) and *Oral History for the Local Historical Society* (1987). Both helped me better understand how to plan for, conduct, and preserve interviews.

Recording equipment. Caunce included a section on equipment and room setup. He encouraged the researcher to view the interview location as a temporary recording studio and attempt to make it suitable for that purpose (1994, p. 199). Baum discussed the topic as well, including the need for quality equipment placed effectively in the room (1987, p. 23). Ritchie also pointed out that the equipment should be placed where it can be easily monitored by the interviewer but where it won't be a distraction to the subject (2003, p. 90). All of this helps create recordings that are clear and easy to understand, an important trait because, as Caunce pointed out, “a poor recording is useless” (1994, p. 201). On the same page, though, he did clarify that it is not always necessary to have a broadcast-quality recording for research purposes.

Caunce highlighted the importance of being well-prepared for an interview by being familiar with your equipment and having all of the needed supplies on hand, as “there is no better way to make yourself feel thoroughly stupid than to have to admit that you won't be recording the session after all because you don't have the microphone/batteries/tape, or because the

machine won't work" (1994, p. 203). I had this unfortunate circumstance happen only once, but was saved by the kind participant who provided me with a pair of fresh batteries.

Later authors discussed the use of video recording of interviews, a technology that has grown in availability and capability over the years. In 1994, Caunce touched on it only briefly as a useful possibility (p. 205). By 2003, Ritchie dedicated an entire chapter to it (pp. 135-154), including equipment needs, setup in the room, artistic considerations, and preservation of media. I chose to video record some of my interviews where it was practical and found it to provide a very useful backup to the audio recording when the audio recorder failed. I did not use the video recordings often for transcription, except when absolutely necessary, as they were much less convenient to work with on the computer.

While the authors' discussion of cassette recorders is now obsolete, I did look for quality digital recording equipment. It was worth the expense, as it was easy to use during the recording process and the high-quality digital files were easily manipulated during transcription.

Caunce pointed out that in some cases recording an interview is impractical because of social limitations or environmental noises that would make a good recording impossible (1994, p. 201). I found that I was almost always able to use the audio recorder, but that it was sometimes inconvenient to use the camcorder. In all cases, I followed Baum's advice (1987, p. 24) to take notes during an interview, even while the recorder was running. The notes were useful for quick reference later and I also felt that having a notepad in hand somehow put both the subject and me at ease.

A final consideration on recording equipment is its psychological impact on interview subjects. Ritchie stated that the use of equipment can intimidate some participants and that it would be wise to explain the use of the equipment to them (2003, p. 137). Caunce put his

participants at ease by demonstrating that he viewed “the recorder as my notebook: a device that allows me both to give my full attention to what is being said and to forget nothing as the conversation moves on” (1994, p. 201). I found that using this explanation with my participants was helpful. Though a few subjects showed some initial concern regarding the equipment (especially the camcorder, for which the women in particular immediately felt the need to fix their appearance), most quickly settled into a comfortable conversation and mostly ignored the devices.

Conducting interviews. Several sources gave ideas and tips about conducting interviews (Baum, 1987; Counce, 1994; Ritchie, 2003). Ritchie, in particular, had many suggestions about how to conduct interviews. He discussed the importance of location (p. 139), suggesting it is better to conduct the interview at the subject’s location of choice, so as to help them be more relaxed, which I found to be true. He also explained the advantages and challenges of conducting group interviews (p.62), something Baum opposed doing at all (1987, p. 23). On the last point, I did three group interviews and found Ritchie’s points to be valid: transcription was more difficult and there were occasional contradictions, but the value of having two people familiar with a topic prompt each other was usually worthwhile.

One of the first questions I was usually asked by potential participants was, “How long will this take?” Baum suggested an interview of 90 minutes as appropriate (1987, p. 25). Ritchie allowed up to two hours and recommended that anything longer than that be broken up into several sessions rather than one long one (2003, p. 48). I found that nearly all of my interviews naturally came to a close in that length, except for one individual who seemed to have a hard time recognizing social cues, in which case we spoke on the phone for nearly three hours. Ritchie did note that some interviews may need to be longer if the interviewer has to travel a long

distance to conduct the interview, in which case he should try carefully to estimate how much time may be needed (2003, p. 50).

Interview transcription. Transcription was an important and very time consuming stage of this project. I found it to be very valuable for carefully organizing and analyzing my oral data. Ritchie's guideline of allowing 6-8 hours of transcription per hour of interview (2003, p. 65) was probably pessimistic. I completed my transcriptions in approximately four hours for each hour of interview, probably because my setup was an all-digital integrated computer program, whereas he was using tapes and typewriters.

Ritchie's discussion of whether to polish up spoken language or leave it in the true vernacular was something I hadn't considered before reading his book. He did suggest that if the language is really rough, it can appear demeaning in the transcript (p. 68-73). In my case, I chose to leave the transcript exactly as I heard it on the recording, but I did some minor editing as I quoted transcribed passages in my thesis.

Baum (1977) suggested that a transcriber may need to do some editing while transcribing, such as removing false starts and fumbles, unless that seems to add context to the statement. It is also acceptable to leave out some passages if they are irrelevant to the research (p. 30). I found both of these to be important time- and space-saving measures. Where I made abridgements, I included summary notes in the transcription, in case a future researcher wanted to find the unabridged details on the recording.

Baum (1977) also included a substantial section on editing transcripts, comprising nearly half of that book. I chose not to edit my transcripts, as they were intended for research only and not for publication.

A recurring theme from my research on this topic was that of transcript revision. Several of the books I read (Baum, 1977; Baum, 1987; Counce, 1994; Ritchie, 2003) indicated that it is standard practice to complete an interview, transcribe it, and then return a copy of the transcript to the participant for review. At that time, he or she may accept it as is or may redact portions of it, with or without limitations on its future release. I did this for my participants and found that few desired to make any changes, though most were surprised at how awkward they sounded when they had to read their own words exactly as they were spoken.

Baum (1977) addressed the concern that subjects may try to “sanitize” some of the material in terms of style and content (p. 72). She encouraged researchers to allow subjects the privilege, but to discourage its practice. I found this to be an effective compromise and saw very little redaction or modification when I explained the purposes of my project and the interviews.

Archiving and data release. Ritchie wrote an entire chapter to preserving and archiving interviews, both in audio and transcript form (2003, pp. 155-187). He reminded the reader that no medium is permanent, so the archivist should plan on updating formats periodically (pp. 166-170). He suggested that paper transcripts are more permanent than other media formats (p. 166). All of my audio and video files are stored digitally in widely-used digital formats (which I intend to update periodically in the future), but I also plan to keep paper copies of transcripts.

Baum (1987) emphasized some of the legal and ethical requirements regarding transcripts, their archiving and public release (pp. 44-46). She also discussed some of the legal rights regarding copyright (1977, p. 73) and limited release of all or part of a record (1987, 46). Ritchie did the same and included some samples for different project types and requirements (2003, pp. 256-259).

The issue of data release to the public became very important to me as I recognized that some of the information I would acquire from my subjects might not put some community members in the best light. I used these authors' guidelines to create a release form that allowed me to collect and use the data I acquired for my research while limiting its release to the public without their permission. While I am not in a position to place the interviews in a public repository (due to the restrictions on release set forth in my permission form), I did allow subjects to specify whether they would permit release of their interviews to others for future research, either on a limited or unlimited basis. I felt that would allow me to bridge the gap between confidentiality and preservation.

Regarding research by other individuals in the future, Ritchie suggested that an interviewer has a certain responsibility to ask the questions future researchers will wish that he had asked, as a subject may not be available for interview in the future (2003, pp. 45-46). I applied that advice as I interviewed, often allowing interviews to ramble somewhat if I felt the discussion might prove interesting for family members or others in the future. I also usually transcribed the complete interviews, including the tangents, to aid in future research by others (such as for family history writing). Any abridgements were summarized in brackets to aid finding details in the original recordings.

Community History Research

Community histories (also called local histories) focus on specific communities. Carol Kammen suggested that these histories are written for a wide variety of reasons, including chronological history and self-promotion, usually depending on who sponsored the writer (2003, pp. 11-20). Thomas Felt's *Researching, Writing, and Publishing Local History* (1981) was a good practical introduction to the method, covering all the fundamentals from researching to

writing to publishing. Kammen (1986) approached the subject from a more reflective standpoint and was somewhat more feminist in tone. *Local History: A Guide for Research and Writing*, by James Mahoney (1981), was written for school teachers wanting to engage students in an oral history project. As such, he distilled the method to its very basic elements.

Purposes of writing. As mentioned above, one of Kammen's sections was about why histories are written (1986, pp. 13-21). She suggests motives such as chronological record keeping, competition with nearby communities, promotion of local heroes, and attempting to preserve the status quo in the face of change. While I didn't read any local histories (as none have been written about our local community's music program), I did find that many of the oral history interviews I recorded fell into one or more of those categories depending on the motives of the interview subject. Having Kammen's perspective on histories in mind helped me better understand some of the deeper meaning of what participants were really telling me, and helped me tease out more meaning than the simple spoken word. For example, several of my subjects told me details about certain teachers' practices. I felt a distinct impression that they were indicating to me that I should follow those practices rather than do as I was currently doing in my classroom. This could have caused me to feel defensive, but I was better prepared for it knowing Kammen's suggestions on the topic.

Felt's section on choosing an audience was enlightening (1981, pp. 64-66). He encouraged writers to consider audiences beyond their peers which may change both writing style and content. I did this in my researching and writing, as I hope my final product will be read not only by university professors and students but also by other teachers who may find it useful to them.

Potential sources. Kammen outlined the usefulness of several different types of sources, including oral history subjects, tangible items from the community, and many different types of written documents (1986, pp. 43-69). Felt suggested that a historian also should think like an archeologist, looking at the physical remains of a town instead of just the verbal and written records (1981, pp. 56-58). I applied these ideas as I looked at many aspects of the music program. Sources included yearbooks, interviews, and even the quality and condition of the instruments owned by the school to inform me about the quality and size of the music program.

Kammen included some ideas about the value and dangers of sources (1986, pp. 44-46). She noted that sources can be good because they provide information but also warned that an apparently authoritative source may be less than complete. Its creator may have intentionally omitted certain details while over-emphasizing others. For example, an interviewed participant could attempt to introduce a hidden bias into the researcher's work. It is therefore important to seek out multiple sources wherever possible. I found this to be the case several times as my study progressed. I sometimes believed I had a complete picture of a certain situation or event after completing an interview, only to discover after a later interview that certain important details had been omitted, either accidentally or intentionally. It is also possible that a particular participant was not aware of all the details, and so could not provide them. These problems highlighted the need to seek out multiple sources.

A final set of recommendations by Kammen were important in guiding my search for understanding. She suggested (1986, p. 50) that a good researcher needs:

- Thorough research
- A general knowledge of the area and period

- Contemporary knowledge or judgment about the place being described and about human nature
- Responsive imagination about the past

These guidelines proved very useful as I sorted out information and sought insights from complicated situations using incomplete information.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnography is a method of research leading to a description of individuals and/or cultures (“Ethnography”, n.d.). Ethnographic research focuses on discovering not just what people do but also how they think. I came into this project with very little understanding of this methodology but quickly found myself doing simplified ethnographic research in day-to-day activities as I talked to new people. Thinking like an ethnographer has made many daily interactions more meaningful.

The best source I read on this subject was *The Ethnographic Interview*, by James Spradley (1979). He suggested many effective methods to help understand individuals and cultures through careful interviewing. He reminded researchers that “[informants] become teachers for the ethnographer” (p. 25).

Spradley suggested having participants take the researcher on “tours” of different aspects of specific cultural topics being explored (p. 86-89), all while trying to use “native language” to do it (p. 17-21). I found that the tours technique was helpful for discovering details about musical rehearsals and performances. There were also several “native language” terms that I had to further explore to understand completely. For example, during one of my interviews I had asked the participant, “Who else was in your class?”, meaning her music class. The participant then listed other people who graduated from school in the same year but who weren’t necessarily in

the band. I then had to gain clarification about how the word “class” was used. I was then able to use the term more carefully in the remainder of that interview and in other interviews, helping to avoid confusion.

Ethnomusicological Research

While this project is not an ethnomusicological study in a strict sense (those studies usually focus on the folk or native music of a culture (“Ethnomusicology,” n.d.)), it does combine some elements of musical research and ethnographic research. It was suggested to me that I should explore some basic ethnomusicology textbooks to identify useful ideas that would guide my research. I used Bruno Nettl’s *The Study of Ethnomusicology* (2005) and Gregory Barz and Timothy Cooley’s *Shadows in the Field* (2008) to give me some background in the methodology.

Location of fieldwork. I had always envisioned ethnomusicologists working in remote locations with indigenous peoples. Apparently, there are some in ethnomusicology who continue to feel that model is the ideal. John Van Maanen stated, “The fieldworker must spend at least a year in the field, use the local vernacular, live apart from his own kind, and above all make the psychological transference whereby ‘they’ becomes ‘we’” (in Stock & Chiener, 2008, p. 108). My first thought on reading this was that I hadn’t done that. I was still living in my home state among people who were a lot like me in a lot of ways. But as I reconsidered my situation, I recognized that (1) I had spent more than a year in this new location; (2) I was beginning to use the local vernacular (it might still be English, but it has a slightly different flavor in this part of the state, and I was noticing new words and phrases entering my regular vocabulary) and was even picking up some of the local traditional activities like hunting, fishing, and raising livestock, things I never had done before; (3) I was living away from family and people that

shared many of my interests; (4) These neighbors of mine were no longer strangers, but were friends. I was now eligible (by Van Maanen's requirements) to be a fieldworker.

Even with this qualification, continued study uncovered the growing movement of home-based ethnomusicology. Nettl suggests that the "field" can be as close as your own town (2005, p. 184). Stock and Chiener dedicated an entire essay to the subject in Barz and Cooley's collection of essays (2008), called "Fieldwork at Home: European and Asian Perspectives" (pp. 108-124). They propose that "many ethnomusicologists, possibly the majority worldwide, carry out fieldwork in their own societies" (p. 108).

Challenges and benefits of local fieldwork. Doing research in one's own location has its challenges. Nettl cautioned that going from an "outsider" to an "insider" comes with challenges, including the rejection of outsiders trying to become insiders (2005, p. 154). I noticed some initial reticence from participants during a few of my early interviews. However, the later interviews seemed much more comfortable, more like a conversation between neighbors or friends. I'm not certain if that was because I was no longer viewed as an outsider or if it was because I was becoming a better interviewer, but I did find that my subjects seemed to be more free with their memories in the later interviews.

Stock and Chiener referred to Rulan Chao Pian's suggestion that local field work can be "emotionally difficult" (2008, p.108). Deborah Wong also described the internal turmoil she felt when trying to write. She played and studied *taiko* music and struggled to write like an ethnomusicologist while also writing like a *taiko* player (2008, p. 77). I felt the same struggle, trying to write objectively as an academic while still remaining a loyal member of my local community, knowing that some of what I needed to write about would not be flattering to my neighbors. It is a challenge trying to live in two worlds at once while trying to please both.

Another challenge is one of focus. Carol Babiracki, in describing her work in rural India, stated:

[F]or those of us who do research outside of North America...our field research is clearly bounded by time, space, “culture,” and language. We experience a very real dislocation when we go to “the field.” We know that our time there is finite, and it will be difficult to return once we leave. Every moment should be spent doing research, attending events, talking to people, and making music. (2008, p. 168)

Doing research at home does not require such intensity, which can be both a benefit and a hindrance. It was easy to go about my regular life responsibilities and conduct an occasional interview. That ease of research caused the study to stretch out over several years, which caused some unexpected consequences (see Chapter 6 for more details).

Doing fieldwork locally has its benefits as well. As Stock and Chiener pointed out, it is easy to move in and out of active fieldwork and writing phases while taking care of regular life activities, all while not worrying about getting your visa renewed (2008, p.116).

Music teachers and methods. Music teachers are a special class of research participant because of the level of respect given them within a society (Nettl, 2005, p. 396-8). I found this to be very true as I interviewed participants in this study. Even while most of my participants recognized the fallibility of their former teachers, the participants maintained an air of respect when speaking of their former teachers. I was careful not to disturb that respect, even as I sought to explore some of the former teachers’ less-than-perfect traits and practices.

Nettl observes that some musical cultures focus on technique drills while others work on performable music that allows the technique to be developed gradually (2005, p. 392-3). This

observation was valid when comparing the principal band teacher and the orchestra teacher in my study and was worth exploring in the ethnography.

Avoiding bias. It was a challenge to become an unbiased researcher. Nettl discusses the challenges of making comparisons between musics, even though it seems a very natural thing for researchers to do (2005, p. 60). This was to become important in my research as I had to explore the local culture's valuation of pep band music compared with the value I placed on the concert band and classical orchestral music I had grown up with. In my personal experience, pep band music was viewed as inferior, but I had to bypass that view so that I could look at the band program from an unbiased perspective. As Harris Berger instructed, "It is not the job of the ethnomusicologist to engage in music criticism, but to understand how music works from the perspective of the people who make it and listen to it" (2008, p. 64).

Ethnohistorical Research

I researched several historical ethnographies as I was trying to understand its usefulness as a research methodology. Michael Harkin's article, "Ethnohistory's Ethnohistory" (2010), was a succinct history on the methodology's origin in the study of American Indian cultures. He also explored some of the ideological tensions between anthropologists and ethnologists (p. 114), something I was unaware of. He also showed how young the field is, having only come of age in the 1980s (2010, p.115). Perhaps this is why so little historical ethnology has been done in music education, as researchers may not yet be aware of its potential usefulness in our field.

I was pleasantly surprised by the readability of Harkin's ethnography. It was not overly heavy or academic. While it was based in research and full of citations, it did not read like a scholarly article. The tone was friendly and at times sarcastic and even comical.

Conclusion

It was well worth exploring each of the research methodologies listed above. Each one provided techniques and suggestions that were useful in my research. The literature I reviewed confirmed my choice of a blended methodology as a vehicle to address the topic I identified.

Chapter 3: Methodology

I chose to use an ethnohistorical research methodology to study the history of the culture within the music education program in my rural school. I sought to discover as much as I could about the people within that culture and how they interacted, allowing questions to be generated as the research progressed. Within that design, several questions guided my research:

- Why were some music teachers in my school successful while others struggled?
- Why did some music educators teach in the community for a long time while others only taught here for a very short time?
- What did the community expect of its school's music program, and did those expectations change over time?
- How did successful music teachers share the limited number of students with other school programs (e.g. athletics, vocational clubs, etc.)?
- What effects did interpersonal relationships between the music teacher and other teachers, students, administrators, parents, and community members have on the music program?

Principal Sources of Information

Most of my information was gleaned from two types of sources: written documents and personal interviews. Both were helpful in the research process, though personal interviews yielded the most helpful information.

Written documents. I discovered very few written documents available for the time period I was researching. Besides one or two documents provided by subjects, the only written documents used for research were the annual editions of the school's yearbook. They were available for the years 1946-49 and 1951-2008. These books were helpful in creating a

chronology and in establishing the size of music classes throughout the years. Unfortunately, they were lacking in much detail beyond that.

Personal interviews. The majority of information contained in this study came from interviews with 26 individuals associated with the school music program. These included:

- Six former music teachers
- Seven former administrators
- Nine former music students, three of whom have gone on to be music teachers or professional musicians themselves
- Seven community members or parents who were particularly involved or interested in the program

Note that the classification breakdown does not add up to 26, as several subjects fit into multiple classifications (e.g., a student who was later an administrator and parent).

Participants were identified based primarily on my prior knowledge of their association with the school music program. As interviews progressed, several participants were recommended to me during the interviews, whom I later sought out for participation. I did not advertise for participants. I conducted Internet research to locate some of the subject that had moved away from the area, relying on Google, Facebook, the White Pages, and—in at least one instance—divine intervention to locate them.²

² While my wife and I were performing some ecclesiastical duties for a blind member of our local church congregation, it became necessary to get some technical support regarding computer software for the blind. When my wife called our church's technical support service, she was referred to a woman who was an expert in the software. My wife called her and, in the course of their discussion, discovered that this woman was the former Jamie Speer (names have been changed—see Chapter 4), ex-wife of Andy Speer, the former music teacher. Had we not made this contact, it likely would have been impossible to contact and interview Andy, as I had no information on where he went after leaving our school.

All participation was voluntary with no remuneration to participants for their services. Most subjects were very pleased to be part of the study and reported that they enjoyed the interview process.

Interviews were conducted in person where possible. The preferred location was in a subject's home, and twelve interviews were conducted in the participant's residence; three interviews were conducted in my music room at school; one was conducted at the participant's place of employment (a school); and one was interviewed at a public park near his home. The nine participants living out of the area were interviewed over the phone. Recordings of those phone conversations were made with their explicit permission (to comply with wiretapping laws). One subject preferred to communicate via email, as he was uncomfortable with a face-to-face or even a telephone interview.

All participants signed a participation release form (see Appendix A) that allowed me to record the interviews, which I did in all cases (except the email communication, which I saved on the email server). The release form allowed participants to limit accessibility to their data to varying degrees. Only one chose to exercise that option, limiting release to family members only. All release forms were approved annually by the BYU Institutional Review Board. Interviews and data security were managed based on the IRB's approved protocols. The interviews were then transcribed; details of the transcription process are explained below.

Protection of Privacy

When I began this project, I hoped to create not only an historical ethnography for academic researchers, but also an interesting history of the music program to benefit local community members, since so many people in town had participated in the program through the years. However, I quickly discovered that many stories told to me contained negative comments

or connotations about former and current community members. I began to feel uncomfortable with the prospect of publishing anything that would influence the reputation of community members, many of whom were still living. I almost chose to abandon the project rather than publish something that was at best unflattering and at worst could border on libel.

At that critical juncture, it was suggested to me that I could change the project from a history into a case study by anonymizing the data to remove names, dates, and places, thus insulating the participants and other involved parties from possible character damage and protecting me from charges of libel. To that end, I tightened the privacy commitments in the release agreements to indicate that all data collected would be anonymized before publication. I also plan to keep the availability of the finished document limited to the minimum requirements of the university, rather than publishing it for community members to read. In this way, I can be both academically honest and socially responsible.

Interview and Transcription Equipment

I chose to use a Tascam DR-40 digital stereo recorder to record audio of the interviews. I found it to be very suitable. The low-compression .mp3 format was an acceptable balance between audio quality and memory usage. The unit was small enough to be very portable and unobtrusive. I purchased a separate microphone but only used it once, finding the onboard microphones to be sufficient.

I also purchased a Kodak Zi-8 digital video camcorder. I used it on the 720p resolution setting to balance memory and quality concerns. While I purchased it specifically because it had an external microphone jack, I only used that feature one time, as I found the onboard microphone to be adequate for the environments in which I was interviewing. I did not video record every interview, as sometimes it was impractical to use it. I feared its battery would not

last for a full interview without external power, which was not always available. I also found that the video camera made some participants much more uneasy than the audio recorder, so I chose not to use it when participants objected.

For transcription and data management, I used a MacBook Pro loaded with ExpressScribe, a product of NCH. It has been a wonderful program to work with. I used a vPedal USB foot controller in conjunction with the software—an invaluable tool.

Data was stored securely on a variety of media, including the hard drive on the MacBook, an external hard drive, and an off-site data storage server (Dropbox), all of which were password protected to restrict access.

Interview Procedure

I planned for interviews to take place at the convenience of the participants, preferably in their own homes. In most cases, I informed each participant during our initial conversation about the purposes of the study and what type of information I was seeking. At the beginning of the interview, I gave each participant the release form to look over and sign (in the case of phone interviews, I mailed or emailed the form ahead of time when possible, or when that wasn't practical, I read it to them over the phone and received their permission). I started the interview by explaining about the recordings I would make, and then set up the equipment as they read the release form.

Interviews typically followed a chronological format, simply to provide a sense of direction. While each interview was structured freely to allow me to explore the participant's involvement in the music education culture, some typical questions included:

- Were you a student at the school? If so, when did you graduate?
- How were you involved in the music program?

- What did you (or didn't you) enjoy about music classes?
- What did you think of your music teacher (or administrator)?
- Did you have other family members involved in music?
- What memories stand out to you about the music program?

Besides these basic questions, interviews were allowed to develop as participants remembered their experiences. I would carefully direct the conversation as necessary to answer the key research questions, exploring relationships between the participant and others involved in the music program.

I concluded the interviews by thanking the participants for their time and explaining how each interview would be processed. In only two cases was there a need for a follow up interview. In those instances, we scheduled the subsequent interview after the first was processed. Another exceptional case was that of my email correspondence with a former music teacher. It became an extended discussion over several months as I would find new questions and he would answer them when he found the time to do so.

Data Processing

After the completion of each interview, I transferred the data from the recording device(s) to my MacBook and corresponding backup media to ensure safekeeping.

Transcription was a lengthy process, requiring on average four hours of work for every one hour of interview. Interviews were transcribed as precisely as possible, attempting to use the exact words used by the participant. In some cases, non-related discussions were abridged and placed in brackets to speed up the process. This maintained an index for future reference.

Following transcription, a printed version of the transcript was delivered to the participant for validation, editing and approval. I also provided instructions in which I explained

again the purpose of the project and describe the participant's right to edit the transcript while discouraging any major changes, except for additions and clarifications. I also gave instructions that unreturned transcripts would be considered approved. Of the three transcripts that were returned, only minor changes were made by participants, including spelling corrections on names and a few dates. Two commented on how awkward they sounded on paper, but I assured them that I would do some minor editing to make any portions used in the final project more readable.

During the writing stage, all names, places, and dates were anonymized, with a code sheet securely stored separately from the main data collection. At the conclusion of the project, data and physical copies were collected and securely stored to accommodate future research. I plan to periodically update data files to current formats in the future to maintain their viability.

Chapter 4: An Historical Ethnography of a Rural School Music Program: A Case Study

I have designed this case study as an historical ethnography. My intent is to explore the cultural history of the public school music education program in a small rural community in the western United States. As a case study, I have obfuscated all of the personal identifiers, such as names and places, using pseudonyms to protect the individuals studied and discussed. I have used quotations from interview participants extensively, and have chosen to edit them only for clarity and brevity—not for grammar—which allows the tone of the local rural dialect to come through. The citations referencing these interviews include the pseudonyms of the participants. Chapter 4 is primarily descriptive, with analysis and insights to follow in Chapter 5.

Community History

This study focuses on a small community I'll call Dover, located in the western United States. It has remained somewhat isolated geographically since its founding in the late 1800s. The area was originally settled by religious colonists and has maintained a mostly-homogenous population of Caucasian Christians ever since. There are several small communities that participate together for both religious and educational purposes, comprising approximately 1000 individuals, including Dover, Dawson, Benson, and Johnstown (fictitious community names reflecting actual data, U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Dover is the largest of the towns, with approximately 520 individuals.

The public school system in the Dover area is administered at the county level from the county seat in Hillcrest, approximately 30 miles from Dover, and is comprised of a small elementary school (grades Kindergarten-6) and high school (grades 7-12) located in Dover. The individual schools each have a population of about 130 students.

Dover High School (DHS) provides a typical offering of classes and activities for students. Athletics are the most popular extracurricular activity (baseball, basketball, volleyball, track, cross country, and golf) followed by vocational clubs like Future Farmers of America (FFA), Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) and Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Music and theater programs are also well represented at the school.

Early History of Music Education in Dover

Music education has been offered at DHS since at least the 1930s. Francis Davis began teaching at that time. After teaching in Dover for a few years, he left to teach in a neighboring town for several years, but later returned to teach in Dover again (D. Black, personal communication, December 15, 2010). In the interim, Mr. Peterson taught a band class for at least one year. He also taught a chorus class and produced several operettas, a tradition that remained popular in the ensuing years (A. Tillis, personal communication, June 8, 2012). By the 1940s, a marching band had been formed under the direction of Mr. Davis, who would remain a teacher at DHS for nearly 30 years, though he took two hiatuses during that period to work as an accountant (D. Black, personal communication, December 15, 2010).³

Marching bands, concert bands, operettas and chorus classes made up the music program for the next three decades (A. Hanson, personal communication, August 3, 2013). As basketball became more popular in Dover, the band began playing at those games as well as in parades (A. Lambert, personal communication, December 15, 2012). Throughout his tenure, Mr. Davis did not teach music full time. He also taught typing and business classes (D. Black, personal communication, December 15, 2010).

³ Davis' post-secondary education was in accounting, not music. He spent at least one of his hiatuses during the 1950s working as an accountant for a large government project being completed in the county.

During Davis' hiatuses in the 1950s, DHS struggled to keep a permanent music teacher; several taught and then left after brief stints. One teacher of note who taught during this period was Miss Dorothy Stevens, who came to the school as an unmarried young lady to take the place of teacher who had abandoned his contract just before the school year started. She was a talented musician (trained on piano and cello) but had not completed very much of her college training when she began teaching in Dover. By the middle of the decade, she had married Timothy Higginson, a local rancher and timber man. She stopped teaching about the time her first child was born (S. Andrews, personal communication, June 7, 2012). She would later return to teaching in the Dover schools in the 1980s.

Mr. Davis returned in the early 1960s to teach for another decade. By the time he retired, the band program was faltering and was in need of new leadership (E. Watson, personal communication, January 28, 2015). Edwin Watson was hired to teach for the 1968-69 school year, though he had no training in music education. As he explained during our interview,

I had a degree in chemistry, math, and physics—a composite degree. And they needed a music teacher at Dover and I had moved back to Dawson,⁴ so the superintendent talked to me about teaching and he didn't have anybody else so I decided to give it a try. I had enjoyed band and chorus when I went to school at Dover High School, and I thought, “Well, maybe I can do some good, so I'll try it.” So I did. (personal communication, January 28, 2015)

Though he did his best, Watson readily admitted that he was not a very good music teacher and did not feel comfortable continuing in the position after the first year. He submitted his resignation at the end of the school year. As they had no one to fill the job the following year,

⁴ A small town five miles from Dover.

his wife took the position until it could be filled. She had no formal music education training either, but was willing to teach music based on her amateur musical background, which was primarily in singing. She taught for only one semester until a qualified teacher could be hired. That happened in January of 1970 with the hiring of Stan Fenton (E. Watson, personal communication, January 28, 2015).

A Brief Chronological Overview of the Study Period

Having provided the previous general background, I will now focus the remainder of my study within a specific time period, spanning the music-teaching career of Mr. Stan Fenton, from the early 1970s through the late 1990s. Other music teachers taught during this same period, including Rhoda Elliot, Lloyd Clark, Andy Speer, and Dorothy Higginson. As the history includes some complex details, I will describe the general chronology here, with dates adjusted somewhat to maintain anonymity. All dates are taken from a combination of yearbook entries and personal communications.⁵

1970: Stan Fenton begins teaching music, including band, choir, and marching band at Dover High School (DHS) and elementary band at Dover Elementary School (DES).

About 1974: Rhoda Elliot begins working as a teaching assistant at DES, teaching music and art part time and helping teachers in the regular classrooms.

1980: Lloyd Clark completes student teaching at DHS. Fenton takes a two-year hiatus to work on a master's degree in accounting.

1980: Clark teaches music for one year, then chooses to leave the profession at the end of the school year.

⁵ I necessarily omit the title and publisher of the yearbook referenced throughout this document to maintain anonymity.

1981: Andy Speer teaches music in Dover schools; his contract is not renewed at the end of the school year.

1982: Fenton returns to teaching music at DHS and DES.

About 1985: The marching band program ends.

1986: Dorothy Higginson begins orchestra program at DES.

1988: Higginson expands the orchestra program to include DHS.

1993: Fenton begins working as a school counselor at DHS along with his music teaching duties.

1998: Fenton ceases teaching music and begins counseling full time; Mrs. Higginson retires from DHS but continues orchestra program at DES.

1999-2003: DHS music program struggles; band, orchestra, and chorus classes are under the direction of four different teachers in quick succession.

2003: Higginson retires completely from teaching.

2003-6: DHS band program ceases, choir and orchestra at DHS continue under the direction of Jason Bainbridge, who also teaches singing and orchestra at DES.

2006-7: Bainbridge leaves Dover. With no music teacher available to hire, music program at DHS and DES pauses.

2008-present: I currently teach orchestra, choir, guitar and Spanish at DHS and orchestra and general music at DES.

Enter Mr. Fenton

In the fall of 1969, Stan Fenton was a college senior finishing a double major in instrumental and choral music education from one of the major universities in the state, aiming to finish in December but not expecting to find a job opening until the following school year. He described his intentions after graduation:

While I was going through the music ed program most of the music majors aspired to moving into well-established programs in larger urban schools and continuing those programs. My idea of the ideal program was one in which I could start with practically nothing and build a good program from the ground up—realistically in a small or rural school. When I got to Dover over the Christmas break and interviewed for the job with Principal Jacob Switzer and Superintendent Lance Hawkins, I walked into the band room and saw a few bent chairs, a beat-to-hell old piano, a few dented instruments and thought, “I think this is it. I just might have found a home.” It had practically nothing and looked to be what I wanted. No doubt part of my decision had to do with a young lady I was dating who went to Brighton State College,⁶ and Dover was certainly closer than Greenville,⁷ but that aspect was down a ways on the list of deal-makers. (S. Fenton, personal communication, January 23, 2015)

The hiring process was straightforward, as Fenton was the only applicant and the school was desperate to get a teacher. The only difficulty was that the Vietnam War was still raging and he had a low draft number. He was told by his local draft board to not sign a contract, as he would likely be drafted within the month. The school superintendent (who was in charge of his hiring) told Fenton to sign the contract anyway and they would take their chances. While it is

⁶ A small college 70 miles from Dover.

⁷ A town 250 miles away from Brighton, where he had also been offered a job.

impossible to confirm, Fenton believed it was possible that the superintendent persuaded the local draft board to allow him to teach rather than be drafted (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011).

During his first year (starting in January 1970), Fenton's music teaching load included junior band (17 or 18 students) and a high school chorus (approximately 12 students). As he said, "The high school [music] stuff had all pretty well faltered" (personal communication, December 10, 2011).

In those early years, the band members were excited to be there and were very motivated to work. The band class met during the lunch hour, which allowed most students wanting to take the class to register. I asked Rita Lattimer, a band student during those first years, if there was ever any complaining in class. She replied emphatically, "Oh, no. We had to take half of our lunch hour for band. Yeah, band was only like 25 to 35 minutes. We had a short lunch and then we went to band" (personal communication, February 28, 2015). It seems, then, that Mr. Fenton had gained the students' commitment in very short order.

Fenton was very energetic as he got his program started at the school. One student, Annie Blackham, helped him organize things in his classroom. She remembered those days:

Oh my goodness, he had a lot of energy. He had a *lot* of energy. He wanted to get everything organized. He had me come in and help organize his sheet music. He was going to create some kind of a directory for it and so I would come in after school and do some extra work for him. And he was really fired up. I remember that. He got a lot of extra duties [at the school] and he kept up with a lot of things. Like for example, he ended up with him and his then-wife Carol helping with the proms [dances], teaching the promenade dances. They had a lot of extra duties. And he taught some other classes, too;

I think they were social studies. He had a lot to do, but he was young and had a lot of energy, and that's what I remember about him. He had a lot of energy. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

As things progressed, Fenton recognized that his perseverance was beginning to pay off, especially when compared to some of the other teachers who stayed at the school for only a year or two before leaving. He told me,

I guess I was a stalwart, and you need that continuity, and you're finding that same thing, too, with your own program. I felt like I had been here about four years before I really had the old blood graduated out and had my own group. (personal communication, December 10, 2011).

One of the challenges in a school as small as Dover High was how to keep a music teacher fully employed, as there were not really enough students interested in music to warrant a full-time music teacher at the high school. In Fenton's case, he was often called on to teach other types of classes to keep him at full time.

I'd always done half-time something. One time, when we filled out a report, I had taught 11 subjects out of my major, including speech and type and eighth-grade science and art; a lot of, most of the English classes except 10th and 11th, including senior English, which I still really like; teaching keyboard, because I didn't type all that well... The worst one, though, was when they thought it would be a good idea for me to teach Spanish, because I didn't know a lick of Spanish. In fact, I inherited that from Bridget Watson, because she spoke Spanish,⁸ so they got somebody in the community, I think, to come in a couple of days a week to take that up. That was a trip. I taught a little bit of cooking, too. That was

⁸ I subsequently discovered this was not actually the case. She and Edwin explained to me that neither knew any Spanish, but taught it using tapes and a textbook (personal communication, January 28, 2015).

interesting. But I think that was 11 [different classes] out of my major. Anyways, I went from teaching music and counseling to some social studies and counseling. Social studies were always my strong second. I really liked geography and world history. Really liked government. (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

The music program at DHS and DES during those early years included an elementary band (sixth and sometimes fifth grades), general music (usually for seventh and eighth graders), junior band (seventh and eighth grades), senior band (9th-12th grades), and chorus (usually 9th-12th grades). Additionally, Fenton directed a pep band to play at the basketball games as well as a marching band that participated in parades and marching competitions during the fall (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011). It appears that the program was successful by most measures, including solid enrollment and good ratings at festivals.

One of Mr. Fenton's tasks during this time was to raise enough money to purchase new uniforms for the marching band. As they would cost more than \$2000 to purchase, the band was required to raise funds outside the regular school budget to pay for them. When asked what types of fundraisers were conducted, Fenton replied,

A lot of door to door crap. I still see some of those ugly yellow tumblers with that stupid smiley face. We must have sold 48 million of those things. Fourth of July and Third of August dinners.⁹ We started doing spaghetti dinners at the elementary. I think we were the first ones to do those that are now kind of popular. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

At its peak at the end of the 1970s, approximately 70 students (representing approximately 60% of the school population) were playing a band instrument, approximately 30

⁹ August 3 is a popular state holiday.

of which were in the middle school group (representing approximately 55% of that subset of the school population). Fenton felt the best performance the band ever gave was during that same time, including a combined middle and high school band performance of *Stars and Stripes Forever*, featuring Rita Lattimer on the piccolo solo (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011). Rita also described that event:

The only [concert] I can really remember is the *Stars and Stripes Forever*, but that's because I played the piccolo solo. I wasn't about to stand up for that. My mom just sat in the back laughing at people trying to figure out who that was... I had to practice the piccolo out in the camper shell. It made my mom's head ache... [Stan] let me do it again as a senior. But because I had been playing the saxophone I wasn't quite as sharp at it I don't think. But he let me do it, bless his heart. (personal communication, February 28, 2015)

Pep Band

During Fenton's teaching career at DHS, the pep band continued to be an important institution at Dover High School, as it had been during the tenures of previous music teachers. The band played during all the boys and girls home basketball games and travelled occasionally to region and state competitions (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011). Justin Lambert, a band student during the 1990s, recognized that the pep band was highly valued by the students and the community. I asked him if it was an important part of the music program:

Oh, yeah! That was the most important function of the band program. I think everybody went.¹⁰ We practiced the pep band music in band [class]. During basketball [season], the

¹⁰ Meaning, all of the band students participated in the pep band performances.

first half of the year we'd practice it a lot. We had a lot of pep band songs in our folder.¹¹ That was probably half of the program, we were doing the pep band music. And it was big, big time. In the old gym that's right there next to [the music room], that whole first bleacher was usually all band when we were there.¹² We'd even have junior band people who could play that would join us. The louder the better.

I believe it was expected [that students participate]... [Stan] gave the community what they wanted. He would always play trumpet. He was always lead trumpet. I think he enjoyed it. We were kind of like his backup. He'd always be up front there with his trumpet in his hand. I played bass guitar later on because I knew bass violin, and that sure paid off. Instead of clarinet. But there would be people in the pep band that would have to go change to be in the [drill team] routine and then come back in the pep band. I don't even really know if it was required, just that we all wanted to. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

I asked Mr. Growden, a principal during the early 1980s, if he felt he supported the band well. His reply was, "I tried to ensure that at least some kind of a little band accompanied the teams" (personal communication, August 7, 2013). In other words, his idea of supporting the band was to allow it to travel as an auxiliary to the basketball teams.

Over time, the pep band became the dominant focus of the program and attracted many of the students that participated in the band program. Through most of Fenton's years, its importance overshadowed that of any concert-band-style curricular work that was conducted in the spring after basketball season was over. The pep band continued to thrive even after the

¹¹ Lambert is now teaching middle school band in Brighton. His band came to visit my school, and he has continued the tradition of playing a lot of popular music with his students.

¹² A section about 16 feet wide with 7 rows of benches.

marching band was discontinued in the mid-1980s (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011).

For as popular as the pep band was, there were those in the community who felt that something was missing with the lack of focus on concert band music. Frank Norton, a former faculty member and principal who I found to be quite a traditionally-minded individual (and later a staunch supporter of the orchestra program), explained,

The emphasis did change [over the years], and as it changed from being a concert band and learning to be a pep band, as we called it, it seemed like we started having a tough time getting kids to make the decision to be in the band.¹³ And the ones we got in the band would rather be pep-band-quality players than concert-band-quality players. And so it evolved into what all we ever had was a pep band, and Mr. Fenton tried very, very hard to put his people together so he could have a concert every year and make that successful, and get the quality out of them. There's a difference in the quality I think, in my mind, between sitting in a gym playing for a pep band and sitting in a pit and playing for a concert. (personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Elementary Band Classes

Most years, Mr. Fenton taught band at Dover Elementary School as well as at the high school. It wasn't always a set schedule, so he had to be flexible about when and whom he taught, depending on the year.

Sometimes [it was] fifth and sixth grade, but mostly only sixth. And almost every year I had to sacrifice my preparation hour to do that. There were many, many more years than

¹³ An idea that Fenton disagreed with, saying that the style of music they worked on often attracted students that were not interested in more serious music (S. Fenton, personal communication, August 6, 2015). Interestingly, Fenton and Norton did not get along very well, an attitude Fenton did not seek to hide from me.

not that I didn't have a prep hour. And I knew that that was part of the deal. The principals at that time, one in particular (who will remain nameless) wouldn't give on that one. Anyway, it worked and it was okay. I did it either during their lunch hour or during [the high school's] lunch hour. There were a lot of times I tried to do it before school. That would have worked pretty well, but the elementary school teachers liked to get the kids in there, get the Pledge and whatever else they do at the beginning and get them lined out for the day, and if they're trailing in from band [it's hard for them], and I was pretty sympathetic to that, so we tried that a couple of times but it never really did work. And I would have band in the library, we did that for a while, and usually I had it in on the stage. That's probably where I had the best success. Had really good cooperation down at the elementary. That felt like a second home. It always felt like that was a very comfortable, pleasant place to be, that I felt like I could take an hour off and not relax, but just enjoy the feel. (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Mr. Norcott, a teacher and principal at the elementary school, confirmed Fenton's statement. He was grateful that Fenton would come down during his lunch hour to teach, and indicated that not every band teacher they had was that willing to teach the elementary students (personal communication, June 12, 2012).

I interviewed several former students that were involved in the elementary program (e.g. Rita Lattimer, Justin Lambert, Mike Thompson), but none of them had anything substantial to say about their elementary band experience, except that there was a band. It seems that the high school band program, and especially the pep band, was the most memorable aspect of the school music experience for most students.

Elementary Music Classes with Rhoda Elliot

While Fenton worked with some of the older elementary students in the band, Rhoda Elliot introduced music to the younger elementary students in a way that helped them learn to love making music. While she was not a certified teacher, she was very involved at the elementary school as a teacher's aide (TA) that often taught music and art (M. Taylor, personal communication, August 2, 2013). Her story is a great example of a community member seeing an educational need and using her personal resources and talents to fulfill that need. She told me how she began teaching at Dover Elementary back in the mid-1970s:

My husband was working on a ranch 20 miles west of Dover. My youngest daughter was in kindergarten so I drove her to kindergarten and I had three in elementary and high school, so I would go there and most of the time sit and wait and take her home, and then go back and get the others. I guess they felt sorry for me so they invited me in and asked me to be a teacher's aide. And I would have done it for absolutely nothing, and I still would. I had a wonderful time out there. I got to do the things I liked to do the best. But I also taught them recorder and harmonica and, let's see, besides the uke I did ceramics with them. I just did the things that I enjoyed the most. (personal communication, August 5, 2013)

Michelle Taylor, who was in elementary school in the mid-1990s, remembered Mrs. Elliot fondly. She said,

[Mrs. Elliot] played by ear and she could play anything you wanted. She taught us a hundred songs probably. We sang a lot with her. And then we played flute-o-phones or little plastic recorders. She taught us all to play the ukulele... She was a great art teacher, too. I really loved her. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Mrs. Elliot taught all of the students grades K-6, but focused on instrumental music instruction only in grades 4-6, at least during her first years at DES. She was able to take the students to perform at other schools in the area, travelling up to 30 miles each way. Christmas caroling in Dover and the surrounding towns was also a regular activity. One time, they even travelled to Hartford, nearly 70 miles away, to perform a Christmas operetta at the elementary school there (R. Elliot, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

Sadly, many of the details of her teaching have been lost to history as memories have faded, including her own. Few students or teachers remembered her until I prompted them to think about her. Many of her students could not remember very much except that they really enjoyed her classes and that she was a wonderful person. One parent related to me that,

She was just the teacher's aide. She wasn't really a teacher, just an aide, but she was so creative. She was the one that had the kids going on the recorders and the ukuleles in the younger grades.¹⁴ So I remember my kids, I honestly can't remember which grade she did what, but I know it was younger grades. It might have been fourth grade that she had them on the ukuleles. It might have been 3rd grade that she had them on the recorders. I just remember that she was a big part of music in their younger time... She was talented. She did art with them, too. She was fun. (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015)

¹⁴ Based on my interview with Mrs. Elliot (personal communication, August 5, 2013), I believe Mrs. Lind's description here was of the later years of her tenure, during the mid-1980s (that's when her children were students at DES), once Mrs. Higginson began teaching strings to the upper grades. I suspect that since Mrs. Higginson was teaching strings to the students in fourth-sixth grade, Mrs. Elliot may have moved her ukulele unit to the 3rd grade. Unfortunately, I could find nothing to document this definitively.

Mr. Fenton gave a touching summary of her influence at Dover Elementary School:

She not only was a great teacher, whom the kids absolutely adored, but she was a wonderful human being. I would have to think long and hard to come up with anyone who was kinder and more accepting and gracious than Rhoda Elliot. (personal communication, September 28, 2015)

Chorus Classes

Most years, Mr. Fenton taught a chorus class. I found it very interesting that few of my participants said anything about the class. It seems it was more of an afterthought for them.

Those who were in chorus said it was an entertaining class. They often sang popular songs while Mr. Fenton played the piano (e.g. M. Taylor, personal communication, August 2, 2013). Lloyd Clark, who was a student teacher with Fenton in the late 1970s, described the class:

The chorus program was really a joke. It was just an easy class for people who didn't want anything hard. All they would do is Stan would sit at the piano and play and they would sing songs. While I was doing student teaching nobody separated into parts. It was just a goof-off class... [They were singing] old country songs and pop songs. You know, John Denver and Johnny Cash songs, things like that. (personal communication, August 5, 2013)

Justin Lambert, who is now a music teacher, recognized that the class wasn't very formal, yet he still really enjoyed it:

The chorus, from the perspective I have as a teacher, highest quality? No, but still we did okay at festivals. But a lot of time we'd sing unison songs. He loved to, but we all loved to do it. He had a packet of, oh, 30 or 40 songs, he just had a packet. And he knew chords. He could block chords out really well. And so we'd just have that packet and he'd

say, “Let's sing this song.” And he'd block out the chords and we'd sing the song unison. There's quite a bit of pop songs... I can see we got to three-part harmony. We'd have the men and then soprano and alto. When we got to festival time we'd pull those out and do those. Our chorus concerts were, we'd probably do four songs...

Once again, we didn't have the most serious musicians. A lot of people just wanted to go in and goof around. And this way he did get them singing a lot. And so to me it was frustrating, but looking back I can see it was the way to go to get something started. Because for a while we didn't have chorus. And then bringing it back when I was there in [the mid-1980s]. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

It was not uncommon to have students singing in small groups or as solos at concerts. As Michelle Taylor said, “He'd always let us do solos. I remember his concerts I remember singing the Ariel song [from *The Little Mermaid*] with some other girls. He'd always let us shine at the concerts” (personal communication, August 2, 2013).

While the chorus class was evidently rather informal, Mr. Fenton did coach several individual vocal students and helped them prepare to sing at the State Music Festival, including Annie Blackham (personal communication, August 6, 2013), Justin Lambert (personal communication, July 15, 2013), and Marcus Nile (personal communication, July 12, 2013), two of whom sang songs in German.

Band and Choir Concerts and Festivals

Band concerts were often held in the high school gymnasium, especially before the auditorium was built in the early 1980s. Having attempted to hold performances in the gym with my own orchestra and choir groups, I wondered how successful Fenton's performances in the room were, as the room is very noisy and has very poor acoustics. We were not very successful

with our attempts, and I supposed a louder band performance would be even more difficult to execute and hear. There is a stage, but it is very small for an ensemble as large as his was. I asked two former music students, Rita and Bill Lattimer, to explain how the concerts were arranged. They explained,

Rita: He was very, very strict about concert etiquette. You didn't walk out in the middle of a song. And you didn't sit there and talk while they were playing.

Me: What would he do?

Rita: He'd stop. Yeah. He'd just hold his arms up and he'd kind of look back. Yeah, he'd stop. Our concerts used to be in the old gym and they'd be pretty full, if you've got fifty kids and their parents.

Me: So that's how he was able to get it to work in that old gym.

Bill: Silence.

Me: Interesting. I wondered because we've done a couple of things in there and it's been a disaster acoustically because you can't really hear.

Rita: We weren't on the stage. We set up down on the floor. And that, but with fifty-something kids.

Bill: And of course half of the people there couldn't see anything because half of them were down on the floor, too. Most of them were on the chairs, but some were on the bleachers. So you could see the tops of the tall instruments. If you had a short kid, you had to stand up. People would take flash pictures and stuff like that.

Me: I hadn't really thought about that.

Rita: Well the bleachers wiggle and they're noisy. Awfully noisy...

Bill: But back in Stan's glory days, his concerts were big. There was a lot of people there.

I mean, every chair that you could about put in the gym reasonably had people in it. They'd be setting up more chairs. (personal communication, February 28, 2015)

During Fenton's time, the band and chorus performed a Christmas program and a spring concert every year, plus a festival recital just before the Region Music Festival in March. The Christmas season was particularly busy:

There was [he chuckles], you know how it is. You kind of get, I hate to say sucked in, but you get sucked in, like at Christmas time, "Oh, will you play for this concert? Will you play for our church party?" There was one Christmas, I had either 11 or 14 performances, personally. I think it was 11, including one at the bank, where I played a saxophone duet with Madeline Blackham, and it was *so cold*. Madeline says, "I think my fingers are stuck to my horn." And of course, there's no hope for tuning your instruments, but we played some Christmas carols, and that's what the bank wanted. And also at the [Christmas] tree lighting, we had that. I was a regular, or semi-regular at the Grace Notes thing with Mrs. Higginson.¹⁵ I always enjoyed that. (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Once the orchestra program began in the late 1980s, Mr. Fenton generally kept his concerts separate from Mrs. Higginson's. While he said he proposed combining the groups' performances, it was met with very little enthusiasm from Mrs. Higginson (S. Fenton, personal communication, August 6, 2015).

Festivals were an important part of the yearly routine for the music program. These included marching band festivals in the fall, Region Solo and Ensemble Festival in the early

¹⁵ Grace Notes was a community choir for teenage girls, to be explained in more detail below.

spring, and the State Solo and Ensemble Festival later in the spring. (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011).

The Marching Band Festival was evidently a hotly contested competition some years. Hillcrest High School (a larger school than Dover, located in the county seat) had a long tradition of band excellence by the time Mr. Fenton began working at Dover. Their band director, Larry Fullwood, is still mentioned as a legendary band teacher in the area. With this background, Fenton described an important event in Dover High School's history:

We took first place quite a few times. The first time was 1976, and it was at a marching band festival. It was held in Hillcrest and Hillcrest High School, their director was Larry Fullwood, they had a really good, large, solid music program. I think it was 1976, that would have been the fifth year we would have competed, and we beat Hillcrest out. My kids just loved it, and we showed up on the front page of the *Weekly Wipe*,¹⁶ or the *Hillcrest Times*. Larry absolutely hated it, and the kids, too, because there's always been that Hillcrest-looking-down-on-Dover thing, and they'll tell you that it's not real, but you know very well that it is... There's no question in my mind that we walked away with it. The last four years that we had a marching band festival we won it three times, and pretty soon they said, "Well, Dover's gonna take it anyways." So the region board decided not to have it any more because it cost too much money [stated sarcastically]. That trophy cost a lot of money. But anyways, that's a little bit of self-satisfaction. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

The band and choir students regularly participated in the Region and State Solo and Ensemble Festivals, and the results were often reported in the school yearbook. It seems that

¹⁶Fenton's sarcastic appellation for the local newspaper.

many of the festival entries were well prepared, as they often earned Excellent and Superior ratings. One year, in the early 1980s, the students were especially successful, bringing home a state trophy for most Superior ratings earned in the 1A (smallest schools) division (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011).

Mr. Fenton took issue with the state music association's festival on one specific point: the lack of an adjudicated guitar category. As a guitarist himself, Fenton was very disappointed that the State Solo and Ensemble Festival would not adjudicate guitar entries. As he lamented, "They would let us play, but they wouldn't give you a rating or have a chance at any award or certificate or anything. They wouldn't count it as points" (personal communication, December 10, 2011). Even with the lack of formal recognition, Fenton did take at least two students to the State Festival on guitar, evidence of the level of work done in his guitar classes.

The State Festival was held in the opposite end of the state from Dover, necessitating a four-hour bus trip and often an overnight stay. The bus driver, Aaron Lambert, was always happy to take the students to the State Festival, and spoke highly of them:

[The festival trips] were always fun. Most of them as you go north were overnights. I always look forward and thrilled for taking them. That was, you might say, the little higher class of kids, was the way I looked at it anyways. There were very, very few, if any, that give us any problems. (personal communication, December 15, 2012)

In addition to the adjudicated festivals, several schools from the local region collaborated for the Region Music Clinic, and honor band experience for the more developed musicians in the area. Mr. Fenton explained:

Region Music Clinic was a fun collective idea several of us newer teachers in the region came up with to spark interest in band. It was held in Mason. Mason was in our region

then and it was more centrally located. The idea the first year was that people in Mason would be asked to take a couple of students into their homes for the first night of the two day clinic. We were all impressed by the overwhelming support of the community. In fact, as I remember it, we had more homes open than we had students. [Five schools participated.] Hillcrest was as hoity toity then as they are now and even though it was scheduled right after football season to accommodate them, they said it was too close to football season and something might come up so their students couldn't attend. Fact was, they were still stinging from Dover kicking their butts in the Region Marching Festival the month before—for the second year in a row. Tee hee hee! We got by just fine without them.

We hired two clinicians, one in band and one in chorus. The band was large for the times (60-ish) and the chorus was even larger. The idea was that we would loosely base it on All-State Band and Chorus and use our best instrumentalists for band and not necessarily quite that stringent for the chorus. We rehearsed for two days and then presented a concert for the community and any parents willing to travel the second night after which we would all go home. It was funded by the region board and I think we did it for three years. It was a lot of fun and the kids had a great time meeting students from other schools. I think 1974 was the first year. As with the Marching Festival, it was a little too successful and the region board voted not to fund it any more. I couldn't decide if it was cancelled because the kids were learning too much or if it was too much fun.

(personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Besides these region-organized out-of-town events, the music students also would produce and perform a traveling or touring concert program they could take to the neighboring towns, some of which were up to 60 miles away. Fenton described the performances:

They were great fun. We would get together a 40 or 45 minute program and take it to some of the neighboring schools. We only performed at Stratford once. What a bunch of s*** heads! We went to other schools too, but never Hillcrest. Nobody needed to tell us what kind of a reception we would get there. We had several garage bands through the years and they were always fun to put as the last number on the traveling assembly.

When we knew we were going to Rochelle,¹⁷ we would always load the program with county music. What a hoot!... As for the type of music, we usually kept of light. Pop, country, old rock and roll, that sort. We kept the traditional band and choral literatures for the concerts and festival recital. (personal communication, February 18, 2015)

Mr. Fenton's Hiatus

By the end of the 1970s, the band program was thriving by all accounts. However, nearly a decade of teaching band and operating noisy equipment was starting to take its toll on Mr. Fenton's ears. He began to notice that his hearing was suffering. He reported,

I remember it was Samantha Timmons on the oboe and Gwen Hayford and Brenda Watson were on flute and they were sitting there in the front row and I was having a hard time matching pitch in the upper register. My ears had been ringing for quite a while so I went into a specialist, Dr. Kilbourne, and he told me that I'd lost about 25% of the hearing in my one ear and about 40 in the other. It could have been the room and the noise of the classroom, but I also ran power tools and chain saws and I shot a lot in the

¹⁷ A proudly rural town in the adjacent county.

years before you used ear plugs. But anyway, it seemed like the best thing for me to leave the music field and try something else. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

That spring, he had a student teacher, Lloyd Clark, working in his classroom. Clark took over the music teaching job with the understanding that Fenton would only be gone for one year.

Upon leaving Dover, Fenton enrolled in a master's degree program in business administration at a major university in the state, as he had an interest in accounting. After one year, he found he missed the interaction with students and returned to Dawson where he still owned his home (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011). He did not immediately return to work at the school, as the position was already taken by Andy Speer. Instead, he went to work for Exeter Lumber Company, a major timber cutting and milling operation that was one of the largest employers in the area for many years (S. Andrews, personal communication, June 7, 2012).

Mr. Clark

Lloyd Clark could perhaps be called a reluctant music teacher. After working in Hillcrest for some time, he was encouraged to go to Brighton State University to get a degree. He wanted some type of music degree, and music education was the only one they offered, though he explicitly told them he did not want to be a music teacher. As he approached the end of the degree track, he needed a place to complete his pre-service student teaching. About that same time, Fenton had announced that he would be taking a sabbatical leave the following school year and hoped he could find a student teacher that would be able to cover his position while he was gone. Lloyd Clark was thus assigned as to complete his student teaching under Fenton (L. Clark, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

Mr. Clark was very easy going and was popular with many of the students. Mr. Bestwick, another teacher at DHS, remembered,

Yeah, [he] seemed to be good. He was the one that didn't have much discipline in the classroom. I believe it was him. But everybody liked him. He was a real likeable guy. He'd play chess with all the kids, that type of thing.... He was dang good at the guitar. I took a guitar class from him and banjo and so forth. (C. Bestwick, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Besides chess, Clark and several of the male students had a *Dungeons & Dragons* gaming group playing at his house some afternoons (G. Mitchell, personal communication, January 16, 2015). Clark described an incident that showed the kind of relationship he had with some of his students:

One day I went out at lunch and my truck was gone. But that was [because] Don Walker had needed to run home and he took my truck down, his dad owned a gas station down in Benson,¹⁸ and he took my truck down there and he saw that the back tires were kind of bad and they had a couple of used tires down there and he just put them on for free and brought my truck back with new tires on. You know, I really did like the people there. (L. Clark, personal communication, August 5, 2013)

Don Walker, a senior, had been struggling in school. Mr. Clark developed a good relationship with him (as Don was taking four classes from him) and helped him stay in school. In one instance, Don slipped out at night on a band trip and became intoxicated. Mr. Clark caught him as he snuck back into the hotel, but rather than punish him Clark encouraged him to straighten up and stay sober. They had a good bond afterwards. Thanks to their shared interest in

¹⁸ A town four miles from Dover.

guitar playing, Clark was able to gain Don's confidence to a degree that he was able to help encourage Don to complete his graduation requirements (L. Clark, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

Mr. Clark indicated that there was a good deal of pressure to keep the quality of the band at the same level as it had been under Fenton's direction. While Clark did not do well with the marching band, he felt the overall program indeed continued to perform at a similar level as under Fenton's direction. He added a before-school jazz band that the students enjoyed. He also prepared, with the help of the English teachers, a school musical theater production that rehearsed after school (L. Clark, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

Mr. Clark was a guitar player and used his guitar to teach the chorus class. He also taught guitar to some students after school and helped mentor a local band of student musicians called "The Comets". He helped them learn how to operate as a band and helped them arrange for a few performances. Additionally, he played with a local community folk band called "The Frumpy Five" (L. Clark, personal communication, August 5, 2013).

Like Mr. Fenton, Mr. Clark was asked to teach several classes out of his area of expertise. While Fenton seemed to enjoy teaching non-music classes, Clark did not:

They had me teach American history, economics, and geography, half a year of each, and I was horrible. Geography I was pretty good. I've always had an interest in that. But the economics, they gave me a little teeny book that was like a pamphlet and I was supposed to keep them busy for a half a year on that. And history, that was absolutely my worst subject in school. You know, I don't think they can get away with things like that anymore, having teachers teach so far out of their area. Now, I could have handled math because I do have a minor in math, but they had math all covered. But see, Stan Fenton

had been teaching history and he was good at it, but I was *not*. (L. Clark, personal communication, August 5, 2013)

Besides these curricular responsibilities, Clark was also tasked with several extracurricular activities. He was a bachelor during his time in Dover. He said that changed a few things for him as a teacher, namely that he was asked to chaperon all the dances and other evening events together with a single girls' PE coach. He said he felt some community pressure to get together with her, but he had no interest at all. Another byproduct of being single was that he often left town to go back to Brighton on the weekends, as there was more going on socially there than in Dover. That cut back on community involvement he might have had on the weekends (L. Clark, personal communication, August 5, 2015).

By his own admission, discipline was not Mr. Clark's strong suit, but he tried some creative things. While he was still student teaching with Mr. Fenton, the following incident occurred:

You know how student teachers are. They have no discipline. I never did either. But some kids jumped out the window and took off. So when we caught them we had a meeting with Stan and the principal and the three boys and they asked me what I would like to see their punishment as, and I said, "I don't think of it as punishment but I want these boys to perform a song on an assembly." The chorus had not done any performing, so these boys were pretty nervous. But I think in the long run they had a good time and it opened up their eyes that performing can be fun. (personal communication, August 5, 2013)

Unfortunately, the students apparently took advantage of Clark's lack of classroom discipline. Mike Thompson, who was one of Mr. Clark's students, remembered a typical situation:

Mike: Um, Lloyd Clark was, how do I put this. Well, he, I didn't learn much from him.

Let's put it that way. He would leave the classroom for a long time every day. I don't know where he'd go or what he'd do, but we'd have a heyday. This wall right here [motioning to the front wall of the classroom] had acoustic paneling on it, and he come back one day and we got into the supply closet and he had I don't know how many drum sticks in there, and we were practicing pegging them into the wall. We had every one of them pegged into the wall before he got back.

Me: And was that an everyday occurrence or lots of days?

Mike: Yeah. He'd just disappear. There was one day he came in we had them [the drumsticks] all stuck in the ceiling. And we started playing and it took him a while before he saw them all up there. (personal communication, January 8, 2015)

By the end of the school year, things were getting even more out of control. Grant Mitchell, who was the principal at the time, related this story:

Lloyd taught geography as well [as music]. And I was up there in the office and I went down there [to his room] and the kids were just jumping on the desks and he was sitting at his desk, just sitting there. Anyway, I made them get off the desk and set down and shut up. Anyway, he come down after class and said, "They got me. They got me. I can't. I don't have the discipline." So he left [at the end of the year]. (personal communication, January 16, 2015)

As the school year was coming to a close, Clark was ready to move on. In his own words:

[The school district] had somebody, even though Stan wasn't coming back they had found somebody else and I had no interest in staying after that. I didn't want to do another year. It wasn't that I didn't have a good time, but it just, that wasn't what I wanted to do with my life. (personal communication, August 5, 2013)

Mr. Speer

The school district found Andy Speer to replace Clark. Speer had taught in the public school system in a southwestern state for several years before starting on a master's degree. Part way through his graduate work at a major university and after serving as an assistant to that university's marching band, he decided to return to teaching. He described how he ended up in Dover:

I interviewed in a lot of different places. And I also interviewed down in Hillcrest, but I found out during the interview in Hillcrest that it was not for a school in Hillcrest but for a little town just to the north, and that was Dover. They wanted me because, first off, I was married, I was in my 30s, and I had teaching experience. Because the one they had before was 22, single, first year teacher, and the whole program just bombed under him. So that's pretty much how I ended up in Dover. (personal communication, July 7, 2013)

Besides hiring Andy, the district also hired his wife, Jamie, to work as a teacher's aide for a few hours each day, helping Andy in the classroom. She felt they did this to help her out, as she was legally blind and had nothing else to do during the day while Andy was at work (J. Jones, personal communication, August 3, 2013).

Speer was hired by Lance Hawkins, the district superintendent, to replace Lloyd Clark. Grant Mitchell, the former principal who was moving back into the classroom that year, remembers his first meeting with Speer:

Andy Speer, when he came in, Lance had sent him over. And it was up in that old building and my office was such that you could look right up on those ledges out the window. He came in and I said, “Andy, I’ve read your credentials and you’re unreal: director of a university marching band and all this big stuff. Why do you want to come to a little old school like Dover High School?” And he paused for a minute, turned, and looked out that window up on the hill. I started looking out there, because he didn’t say anything. And finally I got up and walked over and stood by him and says, “You all right?” He says, “Yeah.” He says, “I could talk to you all day about those rocks up on the hill.” And I thought, that might be a little red flag right there. (personal communication, January 16, 2015)

The first part of Speer’s time in Dover was spent trying to repair the damage done by Mr. Clark. Andy explained the process, and also highlighted the interesting schedule for band class at the school:

Well, it was the smallest school I’d been in up to that point. Up to that point, the smallest schools I had been in were class 2A, that’s roughly 400 in a high school [grades] 9-12. And then here’s a high school of 80. That was a pretty big change. But then it turned into a very large group for me, because...all the teachers at the high school had their prep hour at the same time, which meant all the students were free to take band. When I started teaching the high school band, there were maybe 30 of them, because so many had dropped out. But when they found out, okay, there’s a new teacher, they were starting to say among themselves, this guy’s older, he has a lot of experience and he knows what he’s doing. And every day there’d be new people coming into band and it got back up to,

there were 80 or 85 in the high school, total, and I think I ended up with three-quarters of that. (personal communication, July 7, 2013)

Just as the school year started, Speer ended up with another assignment: Girls PE Coach. In a not-unusual event, the new teacher they had hired for that job changed her mind at the last minute, leaving a vacancy that could not be filled on such short notice. Speer ended up coaching the PE class and also the Drill Team, which he improvised with and turned into a flag corps for the marching season. Fortunately for him, he had spent time working with the flag corps at the university just before he came to Dover. (A. Speer, personal communication, July 7, 2013)

Besides adding a PE class to his schedule, the school also gave Speer a state history class, which was humorous as he was from a neighboring state. As he said, “Of course I knew nothing about state history, but what I pretty much did was jump into it, and as the kids are learning you're learning as well, maybe one or two steps ahead of them” (personal communication, July 7, 2013).

More in his area of expertise, Mr. Speer had a small chorus class, very similar to his predecessors' chorus classes. He described it:

They gave me one chorus class, which was just a few high school girls. It was like five or six girls, and that's certainly not enough to make a chorus. So what we would do is just have a singing group and just sing popular music and I would play the piano and they would sing. And later, my wife got involved with it and I let her do some things because, being a woman teaching girls is a little different than a man teaching girls, so the response to her was a little different and it added some variety. (personal communication, July 7, 2013)

Fenton had mentioned to me that Speer's wife was a fine pianist and that she was very kind and gentle compared to Andy (personal communication, December 10, 2012). Jamie enjoyed teaching the chorus class:

There was a high school chorus, which was just four girls. My husband didn't want to teach the chorus classes, so he gave them over to me. He had to stay in the room while I was teaching, or he was supposed to, because I wasn't a certified teacher. So I taught the two music classes. And it was just a lot of fun. I liked to play the piano and I knew a lot of songs. So I would just type us the songs for the kids to learn, just the words, and they would sing. It was just a lot of fun. (J. Jones, personal communication, August 3, 2013)

In addition to the high school chorus, Mrs. Speer also taught the middle school music class. They sang many popular songs, similar to what she described for the chorus class, and eventually put on a program for the parents, who were very pleased to have a program produced for the first time in several years (J. Jones, personal communication, August 3, 2013).

Marching band was definitely Mr. Speer's forte, as noted by several of the individuals I interviewed (e.g. M. Thompson, personal communication, January 8, 2015). Speer spoke of the work he did with the students:

Dover doesn't have football, I guess you know that... But since there was no football, there was no field marching band. Marching band to them was parade marching. And marching contests, they had their little regional contest, was just a parade march and associated things. But what I taught them how do was a corps style field show...

But [corps style was] totally unknown in that part of the state. None of the high school bands in that half of the state at the time would do anything like this. And I taught them a corps-style marching show. So I took them up to the marching contest at my

former university which would be everything from the top bands in the state down to the littlest ones. And so we went up there for that. But this was so radically different from anything they had ever done before. And I developed a drum line and also developed the flag corps and these other things... The best thing I can say and I can remember, is the marching band in Dover was beyond anything that had ever been here before. (personal communication, July 5, 2013)

While some informants commented upon Mr. Speer's social oddness, they also reported that he was a very competent musician. Mr. Mitchell had good things to say about his abilities: "He was very, very knowledgeable, very smart, and I think he was a good music teacher, but didn't have the rapport with the kids, so I don't know that the music program, I think it suffered because of that" (G. Mitchell, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

While the year started out well, things started to sour about the end of marching band season. Speer lamented,

At first, the students enjoyed everything I was doing. But...after late October, things really started changing. It got to where nobody enjoyed anything I did. Which is, I've never had that big of a change in the middle of the year in any teaching job I've ever had. (personal communication, July 7, 2013)

Students began to act out in class and resist Speer's efforts to manage his classroom. Some students were openly defiant both in the classroom and in the hallways. Besides the repeated problems with individual students, he felt as though there was a conspiracy in the community to oust him from his position (A. Speer, personal communication, July 7, 2013).

One thing that probably hurt Speer was his relationship with the coaches. Athletics are very important at Dover and have been for a long time. As such, the coaches often have a great

deal of influence on the school atmosphere. Fenton, who was by then living in the area again, recognized that Speer did some things that soured those relationships pretty quickly:

He had several kids who were cheerleaders and who were ball players in his pep band, and he insisted that his ball players come off the bench and play pep band during half time. Well, that's a key time for a coach. I think he locked horns immediately with the coaches then. That was probably the beginning of the end for—well, he already did the beginning of the end on his first day, but [trails off]... (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Mr. Speer also taught at the elementary and even wrote a short piece of music for the students to perform. He remembered enjoying teaching there and, despite the opposition of the high school principal, felt that he had the support of the elementary school:

I [taught elementary band] on my prep time.¹⁹ And that's what very angered that high school principal. He was very against me doing that. And he tried to stop me doing that by saying I was not certified to be doing that. Well, in my home state I was, and my degree reflects that... But of course, Owen Norcott really liked what was going on with band in his school, and he kind of countered it, at least that was my understanding. But I was not stopped from doing it. I taught sixth grade band at the elementary the entire year. (personal communication, July 7, 2013)

While Mr. Speer remembered being supported by Mr. Norcott, the elementary principal did not reciprocate the kind feelings. Norcott recollected,

We had one band teacher one time that, he did everything that the war stories about music teachers do: throwing music stands at kids and all kinds of stuff. He did that kind

¹⁹ Later in the interview, he corrected this to say it was before school.

of stuff. His wife was blind, and she often substituted. He was more of a composer than a teacher. And this lady, his wife, was blind and yet she had such a love for the kids and such a love for music... And it was before school. It was a before school program. It wasn't during the class. And yet she'd come in and substitute and I could always tell when Mrs. Speer was there because you'd hear the music and the instruments. You wouldn't hear the blabbing and the screaming and the cussing and stuff. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

At the high school, Mr. Speer created a very difficult situation between himself and the students, and the principal, Thomas Growden, got caught in the middle of it. It was not an easy situation, as Mr. Growden explained: "I didn't even relate very well with him because he didn't understand very well where I was coming from and where others were coming from" (personal communication, August 7, 2013). A fellow teacher also remembered the situation: "He was something else. Man alive! Poor guy. The kids just ran him off. He was bad... Oh, he was just a weird duck" (C. Bestwick, personal communication, August 6, 2013).

Mr. Mitchell, another teacher, told a similar story:

He really struggled with the kids at school here. The kids, some of these (we had some renegades at times, the boys) they'd call him "Cheech",²⁰ you know, and that would irritate him, obviously. He came into my office one day and he says, "What would you say or what would you recommend? There's a boy here at school that I want to fight." I says, "You *what*?" He says, "There's a boy here at school that I want to get in a fight with." I says, "Andy, don't do it. You can't do that!" "Well, what if we did it off school grounds and on a weekend?" And I said, "Alright, I'm going to ask you a question. Who's

²⁰ From the Cheech and Chong movies, probably because of his physical likeness to the title character.

the boy?" He says, "Moe Hayford." I says, "He'll kill you. (He was mean.) He will flat *kill* you." And he said, "Oh, okay, I guess I won't fight, I won't get in a fight." It was crazy! It was really crazy. So he struggled. (personal communication, January 16, 2015)

Some of the students found special pleasure in tormenting Mr. Speer. They would call him names and then run away, or rig his car door to swing open as he pulled out of the parking stall, or were simply insolent to him whenever they had the chance (M. Thompson, personal communication, January 8, 2015). One even threw a rock at his car as he was leaving the parking lot (A. Speer, personal communication, July 7, 2013).

A former custodian/bus driver remembered Mr. Speer, even when he struggled to remember many of the other former music teachers. He said,

Then we had an Andy Speer, and that was a nut... I was driving school bus on all of these activities then. He thought I could put it anywhere he wanted... The only [difficult teacher to work with] was Andy Speer. He was just, he wanted to be a total boss. (A. Lambert, personal communication, December 15, 2012)

Culturally, Mr. Speer had a hard time fitting in. While he was a member of the majority religion in Dover, he considered himself a nonconformist. He did not adhere to many of the orthodox traditions and felt that he was treated poorly because of that. But even by his own admission, he did not make much of an effort to socialize or try to fit in with the local community members (A. Speer, personal communication, July 7, 2013).

By winter, Mr. Speer's relationship with the principal was strained to say the least. Speer related an incident where he walked out of a basketball game along with his band after a perceived slight by Mr. Growden. Speer threatened to not return to the school the following day

unless Growden came to his home and apologized; Growden acquiesced and Speer came back to work (A. Speer, personal communication, July 7, 2013).

According to Mr. Speer, by January the principal was trying to figure out how to hire Fenton back for the following year. Based upon my interviews with Mr. Speer, it seems he felt that he shouldered no part of the responsibility for the quick demise of the band program and that certain factions within the community were seeking to oust him from his position. He blamed his situation on Fenton, believing that he wanted his job back after being away, and that Fenton created a stir in the student body and the community to do so. As Speer explained,

I learned all this after the fact, but what I've been told by several people was that things were going on that had to do with this band director [Fenton] wanting his job back. He quit his job claiming some kind of disability, I can't remember what kind of disability, but it had to do with some kind of disability. He could no longer teach so he had to move to Springfield and so and so. So he's coming back and for some reason that disability wasn't the problem. Well, lots of people knew that he lied in the first place. If he didn't want to teach there that was all he had to do: "I don't want to be here anymore, I'm going to move to Springfield." But no, he had to concoct a lie about it. People have told me that a lot of things were stirred up because of him. (personal communication, July 7, 2013)

For whatever reason, Speer was the only one of the many people I interviewed that told this version of the story. Perhaps it was true and others chose not to tell me in an effort to protect Fenton. Perhaps he simply created his version of the story to protect himself. However, the pertinent facts—regarding Fenton leaving because of a disability and then returning—are true, so it is difficult to ignore the account completely.

Most of the other participants I interviewed felt that the need to change teachers came because of Mr. Speer's poor relationship with the students. Even his wife at the time, Jamie, felt that way. She told me, "Well, he was being so strict with the kids, and they wanted their old teacher back. That's what it really boiled down to. They loved Mr. Fenton" (personal communication, August 3, 2013).

Mr. Fenton's Return

Towards the end of Andy Speer's tenure, Superintendent Hawkins telephoned Stan Fenton and offered him his former position. When Fenton spoke with his new principal, Thomas Growden's only request was that Fenton emphasize the choral part of the program (S. Fenton, personal communication, August 12, 2015).²¹ That said, Fenton reported, "I could tell that Thomas Growden was less than excited to have me there" (personal communication, August 12, 2015).

Just after Fenton returned to work at DHS, the school district began an important building project to expand the school's facilities. Previous to this time, the music room and gymnasium were housed in a separate complex from the rest of the school. The music room at that time did not benefit from any acoustical treatments and was very loud to rehearse in with the band. This new construction in the early 1980s included a new school that connected to the music room and completely replaced the older building. About that same time, Fenton's audiologist, Dr. Kilbourne, died, and his new doctor said that the hearing loss he had experienced was not as debilitating as Kilbourne had suggested. Even so, Fenton was still concerned about his hearing and took his concerns about returning to the loud band room to Superintendent

²¹ Growden and his wife liked to sing and felt it was important. I also found this interesting: I asked Mr. Growden if he was a musician. His reply: "Well, I'm not a musician. I like music. I've sung a lot in my life, but the only instrument I ever learned to play a little bit was the piano" (personal communication, August 7, 2013). I find it interesting that even though he enjoyed singing, he did not consider himself to be a musician.

Hawkins. Hawkins was sympathetic and hired an acoustical engineer to come in and redesign the room from a four-walled cinderblock box into a room with manageable acoustics. Fenton felt that effort on the Superintendent's part showed the quality of their relationship (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011).

Fenton expected that his return to Dover would solve the musical and disciplinary problems that had developed during his absence, but that expectation proved unrealistic. As he explained,

We just tried to pick up where we left off two years previously. It never did coalesce as I had hoped. The groups improved very well but something about those two intervening years had changed things. It seemed like the momentum we had built had sort of slightly lost some of its steam. The groups continued to do well at festivals and we still had great parent support but for whatever reason, we never did seem to get quite back up to that final polish we had had the last couple of years before I left. Maybe it was my leaving that had an effect on it. From what I was told about how rapidly the level of musicianship and overall attitude eroded in the first year and almost completely died the second year, I was really surprised there were students interested in band and chorus at all when I got back. The most accurate feeling I could describe was that the kids were beat down. It was really hard to build them back up. (personal communication, August 12, 2015)

Despite some of those initial problems as perceived by Fenton, band was evidently still a popular class from the viewpoint of the students. Marcus Nile, who was in the band just after Fenton returned to teaching, said,

The band classes and things like that, I think it was just sort of a social requirement. Everybody was in it, everybody did it, so I took them and I played in the band. It was

almost like playing basketball at Dover. You know, it's the same thing: you play it because everybody plays basketball. (personal communication, July 13, 2013)

Justin Lambert's recollection was similar. I asked him whether or not Fenton ever had to actively recruit students into the band. He responded,

I didn't see him having to actively recruit. He would talk to some kids. I think his main recruiting was those coming into sixth grade band. He'd talk with them and try and get everybody. And I think we just about got everybody. There wasn't orchestra at that time. Sixth grade band. And then if someone was thinking of checking out [of band] he'd talk with them and ask why, and he'd get some to say [why]. I noticed him do that. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

End of the Marching Band

After Fenton's return, the marching band never thrived. This might have resulted from a shift in priorities in the local area. Fenton explained his perspective:

The Region used to have a marching band competition in the fall (supposedly to coincide with football season)... Bands, and especially marching bands, were struggling in our area in the early to mid '80s. Marion [High School] and Porter [HS] bands fizzled, Allen County never had much, Hamilton [HS] sometimes had one but mostly didn't which left us, Hillcrest [HS] and Clark [HS]. Clark withered on the vine which left us and Hillcrest. Dover won the competition the last three years the region had a marching band festival. That next year the region board decided that it was costing too much money (one trophy and transportation for h*** sakes—and the transportation was to Hillcrest) so they voted to discontinue it (I think it was on a motion made by the Hillcrest principal). I guess the

lesson we can take away from that is that it doesn't pay to excel at something or it will be taken away. (S. Fenton, personal email communication, August 6, 2015)

It was suggested that some of the blame for the marching band's demise might be attributed to the students in the band. Justin Lambert summarized what he saw of the situation:

My older brothers [marched] in the late '70s with Lloyd Clark. And Stan Fenton did marching band in the '70s. My older brothers and sisters were in marching band. [Lloyd Clark and Andy Speer] did marching but when Stan Fenton came back, it was like, "I don't want to march." Not many of us cared, either. I mean, we didn't mind. If there was any enthusiasm for it in the '70s, it had died out and when he came back it was, no one put up a fuss that we weren't marching. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

This ambivalence about the demise of the marching band was not necessarily shared by all informants. Frank Norton summarized what he perceived about the community's feelings towards the extinction of the marching band:

Back in the old, old days, when there was still a marching band, there were a lot of people when we quit doing that that [felt] we gave up something very important when we gave up the marching band... The marching band used to be a very fun thing and the community was involved in that and they saw the band in parades and stuff a lot of times, and it was a good thing for the community. (personal communication, July 30, 2013)

So while some of the students may not have felt any loss for the demise of the marching band, at least some in the community noted its passing. Casual conversations I've had with several community members over the years have confirmed this to me. One older bank teller is forever asking me when we plan to reinstate the marching band. She was very pleased when I donned an

old uniform and Sousaphone and made a one-man band for a community parade entry this year, mostly for her benefit.

Student-Organized Garage Bands

Over the course of the years, several groups of students formed their own garage bands for their own enjoyment or to play for dances in Dover and the surrounding towns. Both Stan Fenton and Lloyd Clark were very supportive of them. Annie Blackham, a former student, described her band's experience:

We had our own little band in high school. We didn't know very many numbers, but we liked it anyway. We had a good time... And then when I left [school after graduation] they continued on and just kind of joined other bands. [Ours was called] Truckin' or something funny like that. We'd just play where they'd let us. The same songs, over and over... Stan Fenton encouraged all of those and kind of supported it. He said he'd do whatever he needed to do to continue. I'm not sure but he was probably the one that was responsible for making sure we had the band room open to practice if we wanted to use it at night. I mean, he wasn't there, he didn't stay, but we were allowed to go in and practice... He would encourage us, if we had some event coming up, to participate. And sometimes that's all a kid needs, just someone to say, "Hey, you can do this." He had me sing in some talent show sometime. I remember thinking I would not have even thought to do that if he wouldn't have suggested it. He was supportive. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Similarly, Justin Lambert remembered his experience 15 years later. He said that Mr. Fenton would often stay late after school so his band could practice, and often would socialize with the students while they were there (personal communication, July 15, 2013).

Lloyd Clark coached several students that had formed a band that was just beginning to find success during his time there. He remembered helping them get started:

I had a lot of kids learning guitar. In fact, one group of kids formed a rock band called The Comets and I kind of tutored them and helped them get some gigs... They just asked me to help them out a little bit. In fact, they were going before I got there to do my student teaching. They had been practicing but they hadn't gotten any performances. So when I got there I tutored them and helped them learn some new songs and then I lined them up for some performances at the school and it seems like they played a dance at a youth conference for all the local church congregations. I think I encouraged a lot of them to [play]. In fact, by the time I left [the Comets] had split into two bands. (personal communication, August 5, 2013)

Mrs. Higginson's Musical Involvement in the Community

Before beginning a review of Mrs. Dorothy Stevens Higginson's return as a school music teacher, it is worth looking at her community musical involvement while raising her family.

While those community (rather than school) activities are not strictly within the scope of this study, having an understanding of them helps explain part of why she later was sought after as a school orchestra teacher and why, upon returning to the public school system, she immediately enjoyed the trust and respect of the community.

Private lessons. Mrs. Higginson taught piano lessons during most of the approximately 60 years that she lived in Dover. She was a very able pianist herself, having played since she was quite young (S. Andrews, personal communication, June 7, 2012). She was very popular as a teacher, attracting students from Dover and the surrounding communities up to 30 miles away. Kathleen Lind, who grew up in Hillcrest (25 miles away), said,

I just knew she was the coveted one you wanted to get in with piano. I had one friend come over and took piano with her. And the one time we called she had quite a waiting list and it never worked out for me to take piano lessons from her. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

While she was one of the better piano teachers in the area, her lesson fees were modest, and she would sometimes give lessons for free if the student or the family had a particular financial need (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Many years before starting the orchestra program at Dover Elementary School, Mrs. Higginson developed a small string studio and chamber orchestra program in her home. It was not extensive, involving only her own children plus two or three other families. There was no fee for participation in the orchestra, and she helped families acquire instruments. Some of those instruments were her own that she loaned or gave to families who couldn't afford their own (S. Andrews, personal communication, June 7, 2012).

Music in church. Mrs. Higginson was often involved with music in her local church congregations, both in Dover's congregation and in the extended local area. In Dover, she helped with music in many ways, both with providing solo and small group vocal and instrumental music for worship services and with the congregation's choir. At the larger area level, she directed a group known as the "Melodious Mothers", a choir made up of married women from the various local congregations (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Land of our Destiny. Mrs. Higginson and another community member cooperated to write a musical drama, *Land of our Destiny*, about the history of the local community, with Mrs. Higginson writing and directing the music (S. Andrews, personal communication, June 7, 2012). To accompany the original production of the pageant, she directed a small orchestra of

community members serving as a pit orchestra (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011). The pageant was successful enough that it was produced several times beginning in the 1960s. Its most recent revival was during the summer of 2014, and there are plans to continue the tradition in future years.

Hillcrest Civic Symphony. About the same time as Mrs. Higginson began teaching in the schools again, a civic symphony was started in Hillcrest. Mrs. Higginson, an excellent cellist, was a founding member and participated often in the group. Kathleen Lind explained her role there:

She was one of the big, main factors in the Hillcrest Civic Symphony. Her and I rode over there every week for quite a few years. We were members of the original, me and her were part of the original group... I loved it. So Mrs. Higginson was huge for that. She went faithfully. She would drive students over after she got students that were good enough to be involved with that. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

Grace Notes. Mrs. Higginson's longest-running musical ensemble was the Grace Notes choir, made up of high-school-aged girls in Dover and the surrounding communities. The group was purely of her own making and had no affiliation with the high school at all. She conducted the group for over 45 years. In the early years, nearly all of the girls at the school participated, regardless of their enrollment in any school music ensemble. That percentage went down in later years, especially after the high school began sponsoring girls athletic teams in the 1980s, though the ensemble remained very popular, even up to its last performance. Kathleen Lind believed this popularity was because, in her opinion, "there were no real choirs [at the school]", so this gave the girls a chance to sing in a high-quality ensemble (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

During the earlier years, Grace Notes ensemble performances were prepared several times throughout the year. Annie Blackham fondly remembered her time in the group as a just after she moved to Dover from a larger city, and a special performance at Easter time:

I loved Grace Notes because I could just sing out! You know, in school, during school you had a lot of people that didn't want to be there. I was still trying to find my spot in Dover, which isn't always easy, but you'd go to Grace Notes at Mrs. Higginson's house and I would just sing my heart out. And I loved the parts, and I still remember many, many, many of those songs and the parts that we learned. We had a fantastic experience there. I remember Easter service up at the nearby State Park with the sun just coming up, and we were singing "Beautiful Savior". And they took a picture of us standing there in our red dresses, and I'm crying. Everybody else is smiling and I've just got tears, because it was just so beautiful. I will never forget that. Grace Notes was an amazing experience.
(personal communication, August 6, 2013)

The most important performance of the year was the Christmas program, typically presented in the Dover Church the Sunday before Christmas. In later years, this was their only performance. Rehearsals usually began in September, but only if Mrs. Higginson was convinced there was sufficient commitment and enthusiasm from the girls. Kathleen Lind explained:

The girls would insist she do it. Mrs. Higginson would not start it every year. She would wait until the girls would come to her and say, "Are we doing Grace Notes?" And then she would start it. She would probably think about it all summer and have it all ready, but she never would do it until the girls came and asked. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

The Christmas program was an important event for Mrs. Higginson, for the girls, and for the community, and was part of the local annual Christmas tradition. Kathleen Lind remembers, The whole place would be decorated and everybody would sew the dresses and she hand made all the corsages for the girls every year... And then one fun thing she would always do, because to her it was always about the girls, and after the Grace Notes program, even after all the work she had put in to do it, she would throw a party at her house for the girls and show her other talents, because you know what a proper type person she was. She would have her house decorated. She would have the tables decorated fancy and she would have baked fancy treats for the girls. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

During its heyday, rehearsals were held after school several times each week, either in Mrs. Higginson's home or at the high school (while she was teaching there). Once girls' athletics started, the challenges of arranging after-school rehearsals became frustrating to Mrs. Higginson, so she moved rehearsals to Sunday evenings only. This reduction in rehearsal time, combined with reduced participation, forced a move from three-part to two-part songs (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Mrs. Higginson usually accompanied the choir during rehearsals until just prior to each performance. She used several different accompanists for the performances, including Jean Thompson and Peggy Lambert. Beginning in the mid-1980s, she called Kathleen Lind to come up to accompany the group for the final rehearsals and performances (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Grace Notes was never an auditioned ensemble. Some girls needed extra help outside of regular rehearsals, and sometimes even that was not enough to achieve mastery of the parts (S.

Andrews, personal communication, June 7, 2012). Kathleen Lind's memory of the process was similar:

She would never do auditions, though, because she would never exclude anybody. There were some years that you wished she would do auditions because there would be a girl here or there that could not carry a tune and they were really messing it up a little bit. But she knew how to make it so the girls never felt they couldn't sing, you know? And, I mean there was a few times that we made sure that certain girls were sitting in a certain place and make sure the microphones were not by them and the ones by them were turned down. You know how those little tricks of the trade are. But there was a couple of times when she just said, "Oh, this girl really should not be here, but I'm not going to not let her have this experience." It was about the kids for her. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

Some years, Mrs. Higginson entered the Grace Notes ensemble at the Region and State Music Festivals, where they received high marks. She sometimes combined those songs with several others to create a spring program similar to the Christmas event (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Even after retiring, Mrs. Higginson continued the Grace Notes tradition, right up until the month before she died. Her eyesight deteriorated badly in the last few years, leaving her nearly blind and making rehearsals a real challenge. Kathleen Lind painted the picture of those last few years:

She got a lot more personal in those rehearsals than she normally would have in the past. I'd been to the ones at the school where it was more, we were just working this music because she could. At that point she couldn't see the music. I would go in, the last five

years, in September and do all of the parts and it was totally different. Before it was just, “We need you to show up to be the accompanist when it's time for the performance.” But I literally became her eyes the last five years, at least. Maybe a few more, but at least the last five years. Because she couldn't see the music. We'd enlarge it. We'd make it huge, you know.²² But she got to where she couldn't see that. So she'd depend on me to do all the parts from day one. And it would be fun because it would be Sunday evenings because that was the only time we could get the girls. And she would give a little bit spiritual side of things, too, to the girls. I don't know. Those girls, there was a spirit.

You know, her performances the last few years, when she couldn't do the perfection because of her eyes and seeing and everything, I think the programs went over just as well if not better in the sense that there was a spirit there, you know what I mean? The first part it was more, this is perfect, the music is perfect, everything is perfect. Her performances were perfect. The last few years they might not have been perfect musically-wise, the notes might not have been just perfect because she didn't have the time or she couldn't see the music, I mean I know she knew it, but it's different when you can't actually see, but there was a spirit there that was amazing. And I had community people make the same comments to me. A lot of people would come tell me thoughts or feelings after, and people would just say there's just a feeling that was there. And I really think the Spirit compensated for her there. It was so frustrating for her. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

This was the time period when I met Mrs. Higginson. She was nearly blind but still trying to do her best regardless of her disability. The loss of her eyesight was a terrible difficulty for

²² I remember seeing 11”x17” sheets of music blown up from a regular octavo score at the performances.

her, which she expressed to me in conversation occasionally. She nearly lost her life early because of it. She was very independent and would walk to the post office and the grocery store, both on the opposite side of the highway that went through the middle of town. She would listen for cars coming, then cross when she was sure they were all gone. On more than one occasion, she was kept from crossing by a passerby when she nearly stepped in front of oncoming traffic she could not see and did not hear.

On another occasion, she spoke in a meeting that I attended in our church. She said she had made big plans that after retiring she wanted to compose more and wanted to learn all of the Beethoven piano sonatas. Unfortunately, the loss of her eyesight prevented her from doing either, and I believe it affected her deeply, though she rarely complained. She showed me some of the devices she had purchased to magnify books and other texts, as she was determined to do her best to get by. By the end of her life, though, even that was not enough, and she simply endured the blindness.

Mrs. Higginson's Return to the Public Schools

In the late 1980s, a new school district business manager was hired. Kurt Philipson was actively hired out of another district in the state where his own children had been involved in a school orchestra program. Philipson wanted them to be able to continue their studies if he took the job in Hillcrest, so he made the creation of an orchestra program a prerequisite for his accepting the position. While the district administrators saw the benefit and agreed to allow the program, they were reluctant at first. Philipson explained, "The superintendent wasn't in favor of it, the board wasn't in favor of it, there was no teachers that cared. I was the only one that wanted to do it" (K. Philipson, personal communication, August 6, 2013). Stan Fenton described the meeting:

I was there when [Philipson] told the school board what a valuable thing learning a string instrument can be for people who don't care for singing or don't care for playing a band instrument or piano, there's just something about that. And I have to agree. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

The stories explaining how the orchestra program was funded are somewhat contradictory. According to Owen Norcott, who was the principal of Dover Elementary School at the time, said he was approached by Philipson, who told Norcott he was working on a grant to fund an orchestra program but needed a teacher. He recommended Mrs. Higginson, whom Philipson contacted immediately. She then reportedly called right back to Mr. Norcott to start laying out plans (O. Norcott, personal communication, June 12, 2012).

Mr. Philipson tells the story a little differently. In his version, he decided that the school district was going to have an orchestra program because of how well it worked out for his own children in his previous district. He contacted Mrs. Higginson and she declined at first, but changed her mind shortly thereafter. According to him, he did not bother with finding any grants, but simply made the financial arrangements for the program (and a parallel one in Hillcrest) through his position as district business manager. Philipson told me very matter-of-factly, "I was in charge of the money. I'm the business manager. That wasn't any problem at all" (personal communication, August 6, 2013).

Regardless of how the money became available, the district was unable to provide financial support beyond paying for the teacher, but Philipson was key in developing support for the new programs:

The district didn't furnish any of the instruments or anything. What we did, I'll tell you how we started it, how I got the interest up. I contacted the strings program in Marietta,²³ and they brought their middle school orchestra over, and then I bused in the whole district, the [two] elementaries, to Hillcrest High School. So I had all the kids in the district that were at the age that they could start, and an orchestra with kids their age, so they could see it. So then we said, "Okay, if any of you want to do this, talk to your school, if any of you kids want to try to learn to play those kinds of instruments." It was a strings group that came over. And there were enough kids out of that were impressed by that, that wanted to try. So then we just said, "Here's your teacher. Put them in your schedule." And from then on I pretty much bowed out. (K. Philipson, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Fenton was supportive of the orchestra program. In a letter addressed to the two school principals and Mrs. Higginson in the early 2000s (when there was talk of ending the band program altogether to focus entirely on the orchestra program), he wrote: I remember talking to and encouraging our students to consider learning a string instrument. People asked if I thought it would have a negative effect on my band program. I guess I knew it would but I supported it anyway because I knew it would reach some kids that I was not able to reach... That concept remains the same today. Not all students will have their musical needs met by having only one choice of styles of music. Not all kids like to sing. Not all kids are meant for band, and likewise just an orchestra will not attract every student. Just as one student needs to feel the soft vibrations of those beautiful low cello tones, some kids need to whack the ever-lovin'

²³ A larger city about 70 miles away.

stuffing out of a drum set. In the world of music, one size definitely does not fit all.

(personal communication, March 30, 2015)

The first effort to begin an elementary school orchestra involved a very select group of students to see if it would work. Principal Norcott explained,

[Mrs. Higginson called me and asked,] “Could we try an experiment this year? Let's just see what happens. Let me just take your third grade class,” because I was teaching third grade. I was the principal and I was the third grade teacher also.²⁴ “I'll just try third grade.” And she said, “I don't want the whole class. Let me just pick some students.” So she took my daughter and she took [Mr. Fenton's] daughter, and then she took Madeline. She was the daughter of the school secretary, because she felt like with those three, people who were involved with the school, that we could kind of experiment on these kids and it wouldn't be a big to-do. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

All of this happened in the last three months of the school year. As the next school year came around, the orchestra program was expanded to involve the upper grades at the elementary. Mr. Norcott continued,

We cut the third grade out. We did that the first year, and then from then on out we just did fourth, fifth, and sixth. And by the time those fourth, fifth, and sixth got to seventh grade they needed a music program [at the high school]. So she'd go up there during their lunch hour and the kids would actually pack their lunch and would go in and have orchestra beneath their sandwich. And they did that for, oh gosh, my daughter did that the whole time she was in high school. 6 or 7 years, because she went clear through the strings program. It was the only way [Higginson] could get her strings program. They

²⁴ This split-role practice continues to this day.

finally decided, “There are enough kids involved. Maybe we can give her a period at the high school.” But even then they were only paying her a TA salary, by the hour. But, started just as a small program. But we just watched it grow until it had filled the entire [school]. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Justin Lambert was a music student at the high school during this time. He related to me his experience of being recruited to play in the orchestra when it was expanded into the high school:

I was a sophomore. I was the oldest of any of the high school [students] that was willing to do it, or my mom said that she wanted me to do it. I think I was interested. We gave up our lunch time when we started the orchestra at the high school. We had sack lunch. We'd go up on the stage in the theater, and we'd eat sack lunch and have a ball, became a real tight group. It was kind of a small group. And also she had adults come in, which was fun, adults that wanted to learn strings... So we had a mix of adults and like I said I was a sophomore, and we had freshmen and more seventh graders, but I was the oldest. I was kind of like the mentor person through that. (J. Lambert, personal communication, July 15, 2013)

As the orchestra program grew, some students had to choose between orchestra and band or choir. Justin Lambert did all three, but he noticed the problems that arose because of the conflict between the programs:

I'm not sure that an orchestra and a band and a choir can exist there [at Dover]. There's not enough students. I noticed when the orchestra started it pulled from the band and the band suffered in numbers... If [the students] were serious about music they went to the orchestra. And then if they just wanted to have fun and needed the art credit then they

ended up in the band. I saw that. As soon as the orchestra started I saw that. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

A landmark event in the early building of the orchestra program was an invitation to play for the State School Board at one of their meetings. This happened after the program had existed for only about three full years. Principal Norcott told me the story:

We were invited, we took our orchestra to play for the State School Board because they were so impressed, they had heard so many things, so many positive things about how this little tiny community had got a fantastic strings program. And that was kind of the springboard that really shot the program. Because when the parents realized that our little program in Dover was being recognized by the State Department of Education, Board of Education, they were really impressed and they got behind the program. And then it was just a matter of watching it grow. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Another memorable event was playing for the World's Largest Concert sponsored by the Music Educators National Conference (MENC). Performing groups from all over the country videotaped their performance of a pre-determined piece of music in a setting unique to their area. Mr. Norcott and Mrs. Higginson decided to perform inside a local national park, as it was a beautiful, unique setting, and Mrs. Higginson's family homestead was within the boundaries of the park. Mr. Norcott remembered,

She had the place all picked out. Well, the superintendent down there was about the most impossible person you can believe. The national park superintendent. He was just next to impossible. He just absolutely refused. "You can't have a concert in the park." And I said, "Look. All we want to do is take the students down there, sing a little song with the cliffs

in the background, video it, and that's it.” “No, you can't do that. We won't allow that.”

So we were devastated. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

The next option was to set up in the cemetery of the town that adjoined the park, but Mrs. Higginson was concerned about the respectfulness of 90 elementary students in a graveyard. Upon inquiring at the town office, the town secretary suggested a new town park that had good views of the iconic cliffs. Mr. Norcott finished the story:

So, we loaded the kids on the bus and took them down and were able to participate in the “Make America Sing” concert, which was fantastic. And she got, I think she got up at like three in the morning to video it when it was on, when it came on TV, because she wanted to make sure the kids saw that. She brought it to school and shared it with the kids and it was just precious. I keep that as one of my most prized possessions of all the years I was in education. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Philipson was thrilled with what Mrs. Higginson was accomplishing in Dover. He said, “Mrs. Higginson was the star. She just took that and it was more than a job. The money we were paying was absolutely nothing compared to what she was accomplishing” (personal communication, August 6, 2013). Mrs. Higginson had never completed her degree after coming to Dover, and as such was only paid at the teaching assistant rate (S. Andrews, personal communication, June 7, 2012).

Orchestra Concerts and Festivals

Orchestra concerts at the high school were usually held in the small auditorium in the school, which can typically seat approximately 145 audience members now, but was nearly twice as big during Mrs. Higginson’s time at the school. Kathleen Lind remembered that the concerts were always very full. The orchestra was large enough that they could not fit on the 25’x25’

stage, so they often played on the same floor level as the audience, where there was more room. Because of the seating constraints, some of the bigger orchestra concerts, like the ones when the elementary and high school ensembles played together, were held in the gymnasium (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015). Michelle Taylor, a former student, described one of those concerts:

I remember one time [Mrs. Higginson] combined every single one of her students into this gigantic orchestra. She wrote pieces for the little kids.²⁵ We did it in the gym at the high school and that was exhilarating, to see every one of her students playing at the same time. There was probably a hundred of us. It was big, amazing. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Concerts at the elementary school were held in the multi-purpose gymnasium/cafeteria/auditorium, which is not a very large space but can fit all of the approximately 130 elementary students seated on the floor with a little room to spare for parents at the rear seated in chairs. Mr. Norcott attended many of those concerts as both a parent and an elementary school principal. He saw concert attendance as a way of gauging parental support for the orchestra program:

Parents appreciated [her concern for their children] and I think you could tell by the concerts. It was not uncommon to have our parents standing in the aisles because we didn't have enough seats. We literally took up every chair. We took chairs out of the classrooms and didn't have enough chairs. And that was pretty typical... And she usually tried to have the elementary concerts during the day so she could save her night time for the high school... 2:00 in the afternoon and we'd have almost every parent there. And if

²⁵ I discovered arrangements of several pieces in the school music library that included very simple parts. I believe they were likely created for performances like this one.

there were some parents who had a conflict then we'd do it two days. (O. Norcott, personal communication, June 12, 2012)

School concerts were sometimes large events, involving many students and sometimes non-students. Justin Lambert remembered how they were:

[The elementary students] would perform along with [the high school orchestra]. We'd do some concerts. The elementary performed and we would perform. Some of the [times] they might only play one or two songs and then Dorothy would do a mix of, she'd have a couple of vocals. She'd have a theme for the concert. There would be some community things as well. So it wasn't just orchestra. It was a community [event]. She'd bring in one or two extra solos [sometimes adults], or I remember one time I and Tony Jennings and was it Trevor Mills? We sang "There Ain't Nothin' Like a Dame" from *South Pacific*, because we were doing quite a few musicals with the orchestra. And so that was fun. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

He also remembered that the concerts were designed to attract the interest of community members:

I saw more community [members at the orchestra concerts than at the band concerts]. I think it was advertised out. I think she advertised. [Mrs. Higginson] put posters in the stores so people would see it. I didn't see that the band advertised out. But I remember those first orchestra concerts we did we had a lot of community come in. A lot. We filled up the theater with the audience... It became kind of a community thing that way. And the music we did was kind of geared towards kind of the entertainment at that age. We'd usually do at least one or two classical [pieces]. But there was a lot of Broadway or old movies, like when we did the *South Pacific* song, and we did quite a few from those

musicals. Movies. That would have helped her with a community event. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Concerts featured a variety of musical fare, some more serious and some less. Mr. Norton, who had several children of his own pass through the music programs at the school, said of the concerts:

Mrs. Higginson's program played a lot of long-haired music and Stan's program played their share of long-haired music. But Stan got in a little Sousa and got a little beat going that I can identify with better, and then some fun things. But I think they both, especially after they got their programs established, they made an effort to make it entertaining as well as play the classical stuff that they wanted to play. I think it worked out well for both of them. (personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Besides school concerts, Mrs. Higginson often took the elementary orchestra students to perform at a regional orchestra festival in Brighton, some 70 miles away. Students would perform solos and also ensemble pieces there, often receiving very positive reviews. Kathleen Lind reported that she would often play for the ensembles and Mrs. Higginson would play for many of the solo performances (personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Challenges of a Small Student Population

While the orchestra program expanded at a remarkable rate, it seems that the band program did not flourish as well during this time period. A continual problem for band participation at the school was athletics, especially basketball, since one of the band's primary reasons for existence was to play at the games. I asked several former students whether there was any separation of "band nerds" from "jocks", as sometimes happens in schools. Mike Thompson didn't think there was:

I didn't see a rift in there where there was actually people getting their head stuffed in the toilet or anything. You know, a lot of it was, a lot of the guys that were on the JV team would play [with the band when they weren't in the game]. If I remember, Marcus Nile was one. (personal communication, January 8, 2015)

Marcus was indeed one of them. As a professional musician now, he had this to say about the situation when he was a student:

I was a music type. I definitely would have identified myself as a music type. I was on the basketball team because that's what you did, but I wasn't on the basketball team because I loved it. In fact I despised it. And I play basketball and I would identify myself as an avid athlete, sports guy, now, but back then I completely despised the basketball program and having to be in it, but I don't think I had the strength to say "I'm not going to do this." Everybody did it so you just did it. But as far as identifying myself, music was what I did. That was me. (personal communication, July 16, 2013)

Justin Lambert, who is now a music teacher, had a lot to say about striking a balance with the athletic department. He thought Fenton did a good job of finding that balance. When asked if Fenton's ready acceptance of a wide variety of students helped the program, Lambert replied,

Yes. I think that's a perspective I have now. That was a key to success at Dover: the openness and accepting that people are athletic-minded. You know, Dover is athletic: basketball, baseball reigned supreme. But he had basketball players in his chorus and his band and they, he made it so they could be there. Highest quality of music? No. But still, I just was reading, we were the top-rated band at quite a few large group festivals. So I think it was a great mix. Just what you need for a small town... I've realized watching [former student teachers now in rural schools] that in the smaller schools you have to

dance a better dance to be successful. In the bigger schools you can be a little more rigorous because you will have a group, but if you're going to have a big enough group to have all the parts covered in a [small-school] band you need to bring everybody in, accept who they are and where they're at. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Recruiting students into music classes was always a challenge because of limited class offerings at the school. Scheduling those classes has been a continuing problem throughout the years. Chet Bestwick, a long-time teacher at the school, remembered how things changed over the years:

About the time I started teaching, the schedule was such that [Fenton] could [have 50 or 60 students in the band]. You know, they would arrange so that was about all that was in a certain period, maybe something else, so the kids would come into it. Then it got to where more and more kids didn't want to be in it so they gave more offerings, and it just started going downhill from then on, because probably five or six years after I started teaching, maybe up until 1980, the band was big and good and was a really good band, and then it started going downhill because of the schedule. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

According to Bestwick, Mr. Fenton had one advantage in scheduling: he was making the class schedules for several years as a school counselor. In later years, the principals took over the responsibility of scheduling students. Some principals would schedule only one class against the band, like a release-time religious instruction class sponsored by the dominant local church, so that most of the students could take band. Things changed as more students moved into the area who were not interested in either band or the religious instruction classes, so the principals felt pressure to provide more class offerings during that hour to satisfy those demands. Some

principals were more sympathetic towards band than others. As Bestwick said, “It depended a lot on the principal” (personal communication, August 6, 2013).

One scheduling change had a large impact on the entire school, but especially on the music programs. Under Principal James Calder, the school converted from an academic quarter system to a trimester system. Fenton was helping as a school counselor at the time and was very involved in the decision to go to the trimester system and in its planning and implementation (J. Calder, personal communication, August 2, 2013). Fenton recognized that the change was going to affect his ability to staff a band year round, but also felt that the increased number of class offerings the new schedule allowed would permit some students the opportunity to register for at least one trimester of music when they may not have taken any at all otherwise. Mrs. Higginson’s orchestra classes were scheduled at a time when there wouldn’t be much conflict for those students, allowing them to take orchestra all three trimesters (S. Fenton, personal communication, March 30, 2015).

The late 1980s saw enrollment in the band beginning to falter seriously. The state legislature changed the graduation requirements, requiring more math, science, and English courses. This made it more difficult for students to fit music into their schedules, especially if they wanted to take more than one music class (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011). Mr. Bestwick said it wasn’t only the band that suffered: the home economics program and several of the other vocational classes also were decimated with the change in graduation requirements (C. Bestwick, personal communication, August 6, 2013).

Band and chorus participation also suffered as many students chose to take orchestra from Mrs. Higginson instead of Mr. Fenton’s offerings. Mr. Fenton felt that Mrs. Higginson had an unfair advantage in recruiting:

She was able to start them in fourth grade, where I could start them in sixth grade, so she usually had the pick of the crop by that time. And the ones that wanted to, the better students, the higher caliber—I hate to say higher caliber, but you know what I mean—had already been ingrained and part of the string program, so I saw my numbers fall off. But still, we had certainly enough to maintain the program. It was a struggle a lot of years. (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

It also didn't help that Mrs. Higginson was persuasive with the administrators in securing good time slots for her orchestra classes at the high school. Mr. Bestwick explained,

She just demanded that the schedule fit her. She was very demanding and got what she wanted. She didn't care if there was no chemistry, no English, so long as everything favored the orchestra, and she pretty well got it. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Despite the recruitment competition, the band continued functioning even with the orchestra getting the majority of the music students. Fenton felt that the band class met the needs of certain students better than orchestra did:

By the time the students hit sixth or especially seventh grade the less-aspiring students had read the writing on the wall and had dropped out [of orchestra]. Many of these students were the ones who, wanting something, came into the band. There were very few who did not find a place in the band if they wanted to be there. And, just like in the early years, I found again that lower academic achievement did not always equate with lower musical ability. A large number of those who struggled academically seemed to find a home—or at least a calm harbor in the storm—in the band room. And, I was

always happy to see some of the highly functioning orchestra students join my band. (S. Fenton, personal communication, August 6, 2015)

Others echoed this observation, but also noted that Fenton's commitment to running an excellent program also was slipping. Mr. Bestwick, who was teaching at DHS during this entire period, explained,

They brought the orchestra in, you know Dorothy Higginson brought that in, and she was, now I don't know how to say it, but I think she was more dedicated than he was, wanted to put more time into it. So they started going more toward the orchestra instead of the band. And then it really kind of went downhill. I can't remember what happened, but I remember the last year he had the band, he just didn't put any time into it. It fell all to pieces. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Mr. Fenton's Final Years

By the mid-1980s, things were changing for Mr. Fenton. Stan's personal life was thrown into upheaval when his wife of 15 years filed for divorce. The emotional strain evidently impacted his teaching. When I asked a fellow teacher if the divorce affected the music program, he replied, "It did. Yeah, it was a bad deal... It about did him in." When asked if Fenton's work had anything to do with the divorce, he answered,

Well, what he was doing, he was never home. He does not want to be home, even now. He just wants to be on the run all the time. That was Carole's contention. She just wanted him home. She needed help with the kids and the home. You know, getting his master's degree and administrative endorsement, he was just never there. Just always gone. And after the divorce he still wasn't there. Alex was just six or seven and he was leaving him

with the White's there in Dawson when he'd take off.²⁶ He just could not stay home. He's gone a lot more than he was home. It affected the band, it affected his marriage, just couldn't stay home. (C. Bestwick, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

About this same time, Fenton found that he really enjoyed working directly with the students and especially enjoyed helping them with problems they were having. He began to consider becoming a school counselor. He explained,

The thing with me and counseling is that I seemed to spend a good part of my time before school and at lunch hour and after school, kids would just come in and say, "I've got a problem." And they always felt comfortable talking to me. I think a good part of it was that my confidentiality factor is 100%, and we had some really interesting discussions. And so at that time I asked [the superintendent] if he foresaw a time that we would have at least a part-time counselor here at Dover High School and he said that very likely so. And so I started working on my counseling endorsement...

I finally got my endorsement and it worked out so...while James [Calder] was [principal], I was doing counseling one period a day. I had to do it during my prep hour, but I was able to go into the office in there and set up shop and take care of the student records and stuff like that. James wanted me at least half time and he began to become more and more reliant upon me to help him with administrative decisions and he knew I could do that with the administrative endorsement and so forth.²⁷ (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Some people saw the situation differently. Justin Lambert told of how he perceived

Fenton's change in direction:

²⁶ Alex was Fenton's youngest son.

²⁷ Fenton had earned an administrative endorsement by taking night classes during the mid-1980s.

I wonder if he got tired. He was losing some hearing. I think that's why he left in the first place. He was losing some hearing and when he came back he didn't seem to have the same drive as he had in the '70s. It looked more like he was interested more into the psychology and the counseling, and if he could have done that all the time I think he would have. He tried to do as much as he could or tried to get his other schedule taken care of as much as he could so he wouldn't have to teach as many classes and do more counseling. But I think his focus was more that way towards the end of the '80s... He taught a psychology class that was really cool that I took. And so I think his interest just kind of gravitated away. And seeing some of the writing on the wall with the orchestra taking [away] the top kids, so he did enough that [the students] could get [their] art credit and call it good. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

As the quality of the high school band program began to diminish in the late 1980s, support for the elementary band program also suffered. Mr. Bestwick related to me that parents were not inclined to place their children in the program when they saw Fenton's lack of dedication to it, creating a vicious cycle of decline. The situation deteriorated significantly:

The parents weren't putting them in it at the elementary because sometimes Stan wouldn't even show up in the class, leaving those kids sitting there. So they started pulling their kids out. But I think as long as he was enthusiastic and there all the time then they were excited about it. There was a lot of support, but it gradually went downhill. (C. Bestwick, personal communication, August 6, 2013)

As enrollment in band declined, Fenton sometimes had to find creative musical solutions. Remembering that the band enrollment peaked at over 70 students, his description of later years strikes a stark contrast:

I usually found that if I could keep a band of between 28 to 32, that was pretty good, even down to about 24 depending on the orchestration. And I'd double some parts, like if I didn't have a tuba I'd make sure the baritone sax had it, if I had a pretty good baritone sax player, run that bass line" (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011).

Despite his stated efforts, the musical quality of the band fell off considerably, enough for the community to notice. Kathleen Lind, who had been familiar with the band in Fenton's early years when her school's band competed against his (she is from Hillcrest), described the band in its final years under his baton:

You know, I loved Stan Fenton, but he didn't have the same desire, ambition as he did back in the younger days, when I was in high school. By the time my kids got in there, it was a joke, to probably be too blunt. To go listen to the band stuff was painful. It was not the same feel. He had his fingers in so many different things, being counselor in some of that and even principal one year. The kids really preferred Mrs. Higginson's over his. I mean, if you compare the numbers, you'd go to her concert and you've got all these kids and it sounds so professional you can stand to sit and listen to it. And then you would go to his concerts and you'd cringe. Which was sad, because that's not how he really was. Because we had seen better. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

Eventually, Mr. Fenton recognized that it was time for him to be done teaching music. He described the day he decided:

I'm thinking the year would have been when Henry and Patty Durrant were in eighth grade, and that would have been about '96, something like that, '98 maybe. Anyway, Henry was a saxophone player, and really good kid, just *really* good kid. But one day he was just on one. Just being mouthy and disrespectful, and talking, and he'd toot his horn,

and it was just one of those times when an adolescent male is being an adolescent male. I said, "Henry, you gotta be quiet." "Oh, okay." Then he'd keep going. "Henry, would you please be quiet?" "Oh, okay." He'd keep going. "Henry, shut the hell up!" And about the fourth time I focused on him...Patty started getting a little edgy because she knew I have a point, I'm really patient, but there's a point and then that's it, that's it. And so she started edging away because she knew I was just about to that point, and sure enough, he finally did one more, and it ticked me off. I was standing right over there [showing where in the room], he was sitting over there. And I walked over and I kicked his music stand, and the music went one direction and the music stand went another direction, and I looked down at Henry and his eyes were huge. His face was just absolutely white. I just scared the hell out of that poor little eighth-grade kid. And I think he either messed or wet his pants. But I got to thinking afterward, "Stan, maybe it's time. Maybe it's time." I taught the rest of [the year], that was in the spring, we were getting ready for a concert, and I taught the next year, too, but it was just, I wasn't making the connection that I wanted to make. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Mr. Bestwick, a fellow teacher that had followed the music program throughout the years, described the final year of Fenton's oversight of the band program:

The last year was just sad. I went to the Christmas concert and it just wasn't even put together. Some of the kids didn't show up and some hadn't even worked the numbers, didn't know what they were supposed to play. I felt sorry for him. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

In 1999, Mr. Fenton stepped out of the music teaching position completely. His era had ended. The school district assigned Fenton to other duties at the school. He remained at

the school for nearly another decade as a part-time counselor and even as principal for a year. In the end, Fenton ended his career with 35 years at Dover High School, including 26 as a music teacher. His love of counseling led him to work at a private school for troubled teens after his retirement from Dover, where he worked for several more years before retiring completely (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011).

The intervening years between Mr. Fenton's move to administration and my hiring were a time of instability in the music program. Charlie Dunlop, who took over from Mr. Fenton, was a good musician who made some unfortunate classroom management mistakes, including a personal habit of telling inappropriate jokes in to the students, especially during the first half of the year. Despite his efforts to improve his own behavior during the second semester, the community and school administration did not support his continuing at the school, and he found new employment outside the state the following year (G. Mitchell, personal communication, January 16, 2015).

Richard Branley was hired directly out of college to teach band, choir, and orchestra. His own background was in vocal music, and he had some experience playing trumpet, but he had virtually no knowledge of how to play string instruments. He felt very overwhelmed by the teaching assignment. That feeling of inadequacy, coupled with a perceived lack of support from the school and district administration, combined with pressure from his wife to move back to a larger city, led him to leave after two years (R. Branley, personal communication, January 17, 2015).

After Branley's departure, the school district was unable to find a certified music teacher. Instead, they hired two community members to teach band and choir until they could find a permanent replacement. Sam Richardson taught the two band classes at DHS during the first

hours of the school day before going to work at his full-time job in Hillcrest. He was a trumpet player and a good musician that was very willing, but was also very busy with his regular career (S. Fenton, personal communication, May 17, 2015). Melanie Peters was another helpful community member. She enjoyed singing and was happy to teach the choir class. She also helped with the after-school drama program. The students evidently enjoyed her teaching (R. Lattimer, personal communication, February 28, 2015).

Jason Bainbridge was recruited out of a major university in the state, but was not able to begin teaching until January (the situation is described in more detail in the following section). He taught orchestra at both DHS and DES, along with some general music instruction at DES and a chorus class at DHS. By popular demand, he also reinstated a minimal pep band with a few interested students, which rehearsed after school. While an able musician and educator, his interests lay primarily in composition. He left DHS to seek a master's degree in composition after two years (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

The district was again unable to find a replacement certified teacher after Mr. Bainbridge left. This time, though, there were no temporary replacements. I was recruited at a hiring fair at my university in the spring of 2007, though I was not able to take the position until January of 2008 because I needed to finish my graduation requirements.

Mrs. Higginson's Final Years at DES

It is necessary to go back several years to finish Mrs. Higginson's history. She ceased teaching at Dover High School in the 1999, leaving the orchestra a strong and viable program. She was still considered very successful and generally popular in the community. Mr. Bestwick explained,

I remember once at graduation they honored Dorothy Higginson, made everybody stand up that had been in her music classes. See, she had taught piano lessons and Grace Notes, and [they] just went on and on about what a great music teacher she was. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

While it is true that she accomplished much as a school music teacher, Bestwick, who was a close friend of Fenton's, felt that the honors bestowed on her at graduation were excessive. Not everyone adored Mrs. Higginson. While I never was able to determine all of the details, it was suggested to me that her retirement from DHS was not completely voluntary, but may have been arranged by some members of the administration who disliked her immense popularity in the community and her demanding personality. Even though she was possibly forced into retirement, she did not let on to the details to very many people and simply told the community that she would be retiring from the high school position but would continue teaching at the elementary school (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015). As mentioned above, she was honored at graduation that year for her years of service.

After leaving the high school program to be taught by the same series of less-than-successful directors as was the band, Mrs. Higginson continued teaching at the elementary school. However, about that same time Mrs. Higginson's husband was in ill health, made worse after he was kicked in the head by one of his animals. She felt the need to spend more time caring for him, but did not want to leave the program before a suitable replacement teacher was found. Principal Norcott struggled to find a replacement, even after calling most of the universities in the surrounding 300 miles. Finally, one major university found a willing student, Jason Bainbridge, but he wouldn't be available until after the December graduation. Mrs.

Higginson was torn about what to do, because her husband needed her at home to care for him.

Mr. Norcott quoted her as saying,

"I'll tell you what. We can't have him come and not have a program." And so she would come over and she would teach a period. And she would run home and fix her husband's lunch and get him down for a nap. And then she'd come back and teach another period, and then she'd go back and check on him. And then she'd come back. And she did that in order to get our program. And she went to the high school and tried to get one going up there,²⁸ and they said, "No, we can't be bothered with it. We've already got our class schedule, we don't even want it." But she said, "At least we'll have the elementary ready." (O. Norcott, personal communication, June 12, 2012)

By the time Mr. Bainbridge came to Dover to begin teaching, Mrs. Higginson was ready to retire. By this time, she was in her 70s and age was taking its toll. Mr. Norcott explained, In all fairness, she really wanted to retire. She wanted to compose. That was her dream to retire and compose. And she had her computer all set up, and she had her program all set up to start composing, and then she lost her sight. Became blind. So she never, she always felt like she procrastinated too long. And I thought, "You didn't procrastinate. You cared enough about the kids you came and sacrificed those years to try and get an elementary program going for the elementary kids in Dover and lost your opportunity to compose. So I guess it'll be one of those things." The music she composed will be done by her students, because she didn't have the chance to do it. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

²⁸ She had not been teaching up there for several years and the orchestra had diminished dramatically under several different directors and vacancies.

Mrs. Higginson continued producing Grace Notes programs for the next several years, despite her failing eyesight and health. Her final performance took place just the month before she died peacefully at her home.

* * *

Observations about Relationships

This concludes the historical description of the Dover Schools music program. In the remaining sections, I will attempt to explore some of the interpersonal relationships developed by Mr. Fenton and Mrs. Higginson.

Mr. Fenton's Teaching Style

One of Mr. Fenton's first challenges in establishing his role in the program back in the early 1970s was to improve musicianship in the band. He described how he approached this challenge:

When I started the kids, the musicianship was really, really low. And I'm pretty proficient on most of the instruments... But I [would pretend that I was] first chair, and then the kids would challenge [me]. We always had challenge for chairs, and I still remember Priscilla Elliot was the first one who beat me out on flute... She was really timid, very bashful, and she says, "I want to challenge you." So we challenged. I played the music, then she played it, and I said, "What do you think, group?" And they nodded. And I said, "Priscilla, I think you're the first one to beat me." And she started to cry. She said, "I didn't want to hurt your feelings." And I said, "That's the highest compliment you can give, is when you teach a person to do something better than you can do it yourself." That was really one of the best lessons I learned. I learned some of my best lessons from the

kids and it was a humbling experience for me. (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

At least during the early years, Fenton required students to practice. Rita Lattimer remembered how it was:

Another thing when we first started, we had to sign a contract that we would practice 30 minutes a day. And I think that kind of got shorter and shorter and shorter because kids don't want to practice now... I had to practice the piccolo out in the camper shell. It made my mom's head ache. (personal communication, February 28, 2015)

Mr. Fenton's teaching style was usually quite relaxed. Michelle Taylor, a former student, described it for me:

His method of teaching you was to hand you the instrument and give you a fingering chart and we just started playing songs. And it worked! We were playing songs. He'd just show us, he'd grab our flute and show us the instrument. He knew all of the instruments. He was amazing. So we would pass off scales with him. I didn't feel as passionate about the band because I just didn't feel like he was serious. But I just think it was his style. Just pick it up and figure it out. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Several participants mentioned that they changed instruments once or more during their time in the band. While Fenton never addressed this detail, I suspect that students' playing multiple instruments resulted from adjusting instrumentation demands of the band as it evolved with graduations and advancements. Mike Thompson, a student during the late 1970s and early 1980s, said, "there wasn't too many of us that ended up staying where we started." In his case, he switched from trumpet to French horn (M. Thompson, personal communication, January 8,

2015). I asked Marcus Nile, a student in the early 1980s, if the instrument swapping came from students' desire to try something new or from Fenton's encouragement. He answered,

Probably both, I would guess. I think that my natural desire to learn a lot of instruments, and then he was encouraging and made it really easy for me to use a bass guitar or a tuba or a trombone or a whatever. You know, my family down there didn't have much money, and so it was really due to Mr. Fenton and the school allowing me to use them. You know, I never would have been able to afford a bass guitar or a tuba or whatever I was learning. And then there was the out-and-out encouragement to experiment. (personal communication, July 12, 2013)

Mike Thompson, who was not particularly interested in band while in school, felt that Mr. Fenton struck a good balance in terms of his approach to classroom management. He explained,

[Fenton] was strict but he wasn't overly strict. So he didn't let us get away with much, which was good, because that's pretty distracting... You've gotta remember, we were forced to be in there. So when that happens, you're going to have kids that don't want to be there. So yeah, there were attempts to [mess around]. You know, we'd stuff paper in the tuba or something. I do remember hanging my nephew out that window by his feet. [Mr. Fenton] had stepped out and went somewhere, to the office. And see, at that time the office would have been up there [motions to the location of the old school up the hill]. So he come back and he says, "Drop him!" so I dropped him in the bushes outside. (personal communication, January 8, 2015)

Mr. Fenton was willing to laugh with the class clowns from time to time, demonstrating the balance he maintained in managing his classes. Justin Lambert remembered:

He had a lot more patience than I did, as a student, with some of the other kids. Because there was a lot of goofing around, and just a lot of it, he could laugh with them. There were some times that he'd say, "Okay, this is serious. Cut it out." But it seemed like in the low brass section (that's where Tony was and Tom Frederickson and some of those guys) they were constantly doing funny things back there. And he went with them and he kept them, and they played well when it was time to play. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Lambert had great insight into Fenton's classroom demeanor as he now focuses on similar challenges as a music educator. He saw that Fenton was willing to relax sometimes and help the students with their needs, even if those needs weren't musical. Lambert said this about his band-room experience:

I can remember a lot of times we'd get talking about one thing or another in band and it would become a, we'd talk a while. He'd take time to discuss what people had questions about, "Why do they do this at high school?" or, "Why do they do that at the high school?" or, "Why did the teachers decide this?" I can remember that he'd stop and say, "Let's talk about it. Get it out of your system so we can get back to playing." I was probably more music-driven so sometimes I could let that go, but as a teacher I can see if you're going to try to bring more people in you have to try to accommodate people instead of be this way [signaling straight, on task, with his hand] all the time. He would have always kept me because my mom was a musician, but a lot of the other people I think he would have lost if he'd played hard line: "Well, you're in music class, we're doing music." So his fun nature and willingness to get off task with students for a while, go with them on their [tangents] helped. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Mr. Fenton felt those times of getting off-topic were important to his relationship with the students. He said,

There was always the letdown after a concert or major performance or festival but I would always take some time, usually let the kids have a day away from their instruments, discuss some about the performance and just try to take it all in and try to make it fit into the whole picture of what it was we were trying to do. Those were good times, times of renewal. Time, I felt, should not be hurried. We had some of our best discussions in those sessions. Things came out about our performance, what we did well and not do so well, the surprises (there are *always* surprises), what I was going to do over the summer, why did the President send in troops to Iran, who is the new church leader in Dawson, all stuff that was on the kids' minds. Sometimes they just need to let it out and get an adult perspective (even if they mistakenly considered mine as an adult perspective!). These times, like the bus trips, were times when you got well past the façade and got to know each other. This is part, I guess, what got me into the counseling. (personal communication, February 18, 2015)

Lambert thought that even though Fenton was generally laid back as an individual, his rehearsals were well organized. He gave a good description of how they went:

In band, I can remember there would be a list on the board. There would be warmups we'd do. And certain songs, that was usually on the board so we knew what was going on, where we were going. I liked that Stan Fenton would do warmups that were interesting and kind of challenging. He'd tap a rhythm to a song on the music stand and we'd try to guess what song it was. So he'd do some challenge things that way. I don't remember having to pass off scales. We'd practice like four scales. We'd work on tone

and tuning. He'd have someone play it on an instrument or he'd play it on a machine. We'd try and match it. He'd go around and see how close we were. So he'd try to get us to train our ears that way, not just him tune it. And then just work on the songs. It was kind of relaxed in that way. We'd just play the songs and if there was something to fix then we'd fix it and keep going. It wasn't that we really tried to develop excellent musicians. He tried to pick songs students would like. Jim Swearingen stuff was popular with us...

I believe [the process] was kind of play through the song, pick a spot or two to work and feel like that was enough for today and we'll get some more tomorrow. Instead of trying to fix everything right now. He let things go... I feel it was more play the song for the enjoyment and fix a bit. It was more enjoyment, fix a bit and if the concert's not perfect, nobody's perfect. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Mike Thompson mentioned that Fenton helped the younger students find success early. He said, "He was a really good teacher. He was able to get it across and everything. He had me playing pretty quick. By the time we were in eighth grade we were pretty good" (personal communication, January 8, 2015).

Fenton had a wonderful mastery of words, something I noticed in our interviews and casual visits. Apparently, he had a way of using that mastery as he attempted to vent his frustration at the students without coming off as vicious to them (as at least some of them couldn't follow what he was saying because of the high vocabulary level). Rita Lattimer remembered one incident:

I never really saw him blow up at anybody or anything, but *boy* he could be sarcastic...

He told me once that my insolence was appalling. And I had to go home and look up

insolence and appalling, and then I was insulted. (personal communication, February 28, 2015)

Only one participant related any information about substitute teachers used during Fenton's time. Justin Lambert explained that while he was there, the plans left for substitute teachers were quite informal:

Sometimes he'd just say [to the students before he left], "Oh, have a dance." So Marissa [the substitute teacher] would come in and people would have their tapes and play tapes, especially seventh and eighth grade, that's where I remember it was seventh and eighth grade anyways. "Don't even have them get their instruments out. Just have them dance." And so we'd, I remember "Come On, Play the Noise" and "Come and Hang Your Head". That was some of my first exposure to some of that heavy metal stuff. Quiet Riot, that was the group. We all liked that at the time. I'm sure Marissa was just like, "Oh, boy, I get to go do seventh and eighth grade band!" But play, [shaking head], because Marissa didn't know music. Who are you going to get to sub a lot of times? (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Mr. Fenton's Relationships with Others

Fenton with students. Mr. Fenton was very aware of his relationship with his students. He mentioned several instances where he would work closely with an individual student. In one case, Marcus Nile was working towards an important foreign language scholarship competition and needed help getting ready. Fenton told the story:

Marcus says, "I just don't know what to do." His grades just weren't stellar like they have to be. But I said, "Marcus, I think we have a little bit of an edge. Why don't we have you sing a song in German as part of your interview?" And he sang "O Isis und Osiris" in

German, and I taught him all the German. He was basing all his language on Spanish because he'd done quite well in Spanish for two years, but we did that to show versatility in language, and he interviewed very well, and danged if he didn't get runner-up. And his picture is now up there in the library. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Despite some of the problems that were happening within the band program, Mr. Fenton still loved to work with individual students and took care to help those who were dedicated.

Kathleen Lind told me about her son, Micah:

Stan loved Micah, and when Micah was a junior, for Christmas Stan gave him the nicest piano book of all the classics and everything. He took a real personal interest in Micah. He appreciated Micah's desire with music, with piano and violin and everything. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

Fenton tried to be accessible to students. Justin Lambert, who later went on to teach music, was a student during the late 1980s. He described Fenton's accessibility:

Justin: He was a counselor, but the cool thing about Mr. Fenton was a lot of times he left his band doors unlocked, so when we had a free period or lunch or after school we could go in there. A lot of times he was in there and we'd just start talking. He showed me how to repair quite a few instruments, and I did quite a bit of music. I played on his grand piano in there a lot... He would say, "Hey, you need to come back and teach here." And so he, music-wise, he counseled me a lot about getting into music. I don't know if he did that with everybody.

Me: But he generally kind of kept an open door?

Justin: Yeah, yeah. He was very social with the students.

Me: Did it seem like most students felt comfortable just coming in and talking to him?

Justin: Oh, yeah.

Me: Was it just band students or was it everybody?

Justin: I think it was everybody felt comfortable with Stan Fenton. He had some psychology background. He'd studied, I think it was while he was still a teacher, he'd studied. And I think he felt the role of trying to help people find their way through high school, and counseling of course. But he had lots of talks with people. And they felt comfortable with him that way. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Fenton tried to help the students in somewhat non-traditional ways that others may have considered questionable or even unethical, but apparently he had good intentions. Lambert remembered his experience with the All-State Choir:

He got me into All-State Choir three years, which I loved. I think he snuck me in... I probably went in legitimately my senior year. But he had a lot of friends up there, and a small school and all. He was like, "This boy needs this experience. Can you get him in?" He was willing to go to bat for the small school, even if it doesn't fit their system and their rules. It's what's best for the kid, for the student. So it's a little different that way. Spirit of the law more than letter with Stan. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Annie Blackham remembered a very similar experience, back when Fenton first started teaching at Dover. She said, "Stan decided that I was going to go to All-State Choir. And he drove me up... I didn't know anyone, but we got to sing in a large church and it was really amazing" (personal communication, August 6, 2013).

Fenton looked out for individual students and tried to help them be successful. In at least one instance, he used the differences between himself and Mrs. Higginson to help a student under a great deal of pressure to succeed:

[The contrast between Mr. Fenton and Mrs. Higginson] gave people what they needed. I think it worked really good for me because I needed to learn just how to enjoy and relax also. I think Stan was concerned psychologically for me, and rightly so. I think he helped me a lot just trying to not put so much pressure on myself... A lot of times he was kind of seen as the, what would you call it, the devil, the anti-Dorothy. He would be the one that was kind of like, "You don't have to be perfect. Make sure you're enjoying it." I think he was really concerned with the perfectionistic tendencies I displayed. So he served a very good purpose also. (J. Lambert, personal communication, July 15, 2013)

My impression was that Mr. Fenton was very aware of the needs of individual students while he was teaching them. While his interest in high-quality music apparently waned over time, his interest in taking care of the needs of individual students did not, and evidently continued to increase to the point that he moved from music teaching into school counseling.

Fenton with parents. In the early years, Fenton had to work hard to build a program, and sometimes that meant visiting with reluctant or unsupportive parents at their homes. Rita Lattimer described how she began playing the flute:

He came and he talked to us and [flute] was just the instrument I picked. He had to come to my home because my mother wasn't sold on it. And finally she said, "Okay we'll get you this flute but you'll have to play on it until you graduate from high school. There'll be no getting tired of it." ...I think he probably ended up doing that for a lot of the kids because he was trying to build a program. (personal communication, February 28, 2015)

At least a few parents recognized that Mr. Fenton was not nearly as serious about music as Mrs. Higginson, and viewed the band program accordingly. Owen Norcott said, “Well, as far as band went, we never bought [our children] band instruments because we never felt like they were that serious” (personal communication, June 12, 2012). Kathleen Lind’s sentiments were similar, and mentioned, only somewhat sarcastically, that she had a hardly-used trumpet for sale (personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Mr. Bestwick, a fellow teacher, felt that as the quality of the program declined, so did parental support. He said, “I think, too, that he started losing support from the parents when he lost interest. So they were pulling kids out of bands” (personal communication, August 6, 2013).

Fenton with the community. Mr. Fenton developed a strong relationship with the community during his years in Dover that contributed to his staying so long in an area to which he had no ties other than his employment. I asked him why he stayed for so many years. His reply is a good description of the community and his relationship with it:

As for what kept me there so long, I guess it boils down to the type of people with whom I could associate every day. This was the students, parents and the staff at each school and the community members in general. They were honest, hard-working, down-to-earth people who wanted the very best for their kids and would go to any length to get everything they could for their kids—and other peoples' kids as well. It was pretty much, “We're all in this thing together so let's make it the best we can for everyone.” There were some farmers but with a lack of farmland in Dover there weren't many and most of them supplemented their farm by working for Exeter Lumber Company. Most people in Dover worked for Exeter, some were small business owners, a few had construction-type jobs and were truck drivers, mostly blue collar type jobs. And, of course, there was always the

local hotel/restaurant and other seasonal workers at least tacitly associated with the tourist industry. In short, these were what I considered my kind of people. I had grown up in a small town in the state and swore when I left to “never live in a place like that again.”

Right! Never say never. I think one of the best compliments I ever received while teaching was from one of the lunchroom cooks at the elementary. We were talking about my program and how much I liked working in the schools and how people made me feel accepted and the lady said, “Well Stan, it's because you are one of us.” I remember thinking, “Wow! Now that's cool.” (personal communication, January 23, 2015)

Fenton interacted with the community through the concerts the school musicians presented. They were often well-attended (R. Lattimer, personal communication, February 28, 2015). Fenton used the concerts as an opportunity to educate the community:

I would train the audiences on when to applaud and when not to, and I felt okay about that. I'd see some smiles from the audience, because invariably, in the middle of the multi-movement pieces... [both of us chuckle knowingly]. There were a couple of times I'd go like this [shows the angry-conductor-to-the-impolite-audience look], I'd turn around and you can feel people shrink. But that's okay. This doesn't have to be a cultural wasteland. (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Besides school concerts, Mr. Fenton tried to get the students out playing in the community. He felt that it was important for the community to see what they were doing. He described some of what they did and why:

One of the earliest lessons that I learned was that there was a crying need for all things musical in the communities. As soon as any of my groups were even close to being prepared to go public, we were asked to perform in community and church functions.

Besides our regular Christmas and spring concerts, festival recital (where we performed the numbers going to Region Solo and Ensemble Festival) and pep band for all home boys and girls basketball games, there were Christmas tree lightings, Veterans Day programs, church programs, Fourth of July and County Fair parades, First National Bank parties (for hell sake!) and about any other excuse to have some music. Mrs. Higginson took up some of the slack with her Grace Notes group and early string groups but that was mostly at Christmas time and for an occasional church meeting. Interaction with the communities was always part of what the job entailed even though it did not show up in the job description. It was just understood that that was the way it was. And, to be fair, I did not really mind... Although my wife never did understand this part of it, I felt that it was important to my program to be visible and let the communities know what we were doing in the department. (S. Fenton, personal communication, January 27, 2015)

As enrollment in the band program dropped below the sustainable level in the late 1990s, Fenton reached out to community members, mostly alumni, to supplement the school musicians. He recounted:

We tried a community band a couple of times. The closest we came was having several people play with the pep band over the years. Rita Lattimer was by far my best supporter there. She and her three kids and I and a few others ended up being the core of the pep band the last few years we had pep band. It was fun. We could still do *William Tell Overture*. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Rita and Bill Lattimer remembered that band fondly when I asked them about it.

Rita: David played the drums and Adam played...his baritone. Jill played the clarinet and Mr. Fenton played the trumpet.

Bill: And Rita played the sax.

Rita: Yeah, there was just a couple of other kids.

Bill: It was just our family and Stan mostly.

Me: And this would have been just before he quit then?

Rita: Yeah, back in the '90s, because Adam graduated in '97, so yeah. And Bill would run the concession stand because the music [program] took care of that while we made music. It was fun. Never could get the *William Tell Overture* down. Too much tongue. (personal communication, February 28, 2015)

Fenton also taught an evening guitar class (and even an evening banjo class) for many years, open to community members. Marcus Nile described the arrangement:

Mr. Fenton was teaching group guitar classes, I believe it was like a Wednesday night. So I think I was 12 when I got my guitar. So I would go and have these group classes with him. I think it was on Wednesday nights, and that sort of started me in music. (personal communication, July 16, 2013)

That “start in music” later led Nile to a career as a professional vocal coach with several prominent performers as clients. He felt that the out-of-school classes were more meaningful than the regular curricular classes:

I think I remember the external classes more. I mean, band classes, you know you went to band class and you got ready for the winter concerts or whatever it is you're preparing for, the spring session, just the particular pieces you're working on and all that good stuff. But the motivation for music came from the external classes, the guitar classes at night or whatever. Those sorts of things really drove me. Which probably triggered the internal motivation with music. (M. Nile, personal communication, July 16, 2013)

Mr. Fenton was often asked to perform at community events, notably funerals. He said, “That is one place, as much as any other, where I felt I was making a contribution to the community” (personal communication, February 18, 2015). Kathleen Lind also remembered:

He always brought his guitar because he was always asked to do cowboy songs for all the old cowboys, or whatever. He did a lot of, he was always asked to do funerals and other types of community things. He was always involved in that. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

Fenton participated to some degree in the Hillcrest Civic Symphony, playing trumpet.

Kathleen Lind reported,

He did do the orchestra in Hillcrest quite a bit. There was actually a couple of years when we were first getting started with all that that we would do one rehearsal over here in Dover, you know like every other rehearsal over here in Dover. And he would make sure the band room was open and participated with that because we did have rehearsals over here. He was good to do what he was asked to do. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

At least by the mid-1980s, Fenton wasn't always as involved in local community music events as Mrs. Higginson. Justin Lambert saw that, and gave some of his interpretation as to why that might have been:

I think she reached out to the community that way where I don't think Stan reached out to the community. I didn't see where he wanted to mix so much in the community. I know quite a few times that Dorothy and others expressed dismay at the fact that, “Where's Stan? We're doing this community thing, this musical or this heritage thing.” I think when it's your job, your full-time job, I understand that feeling. I'm not part of the civic

orchestra here. I come home and I want to be Dad. Like the mechanic, when you're a mechanic all day you don't want to work on your car at home. When I've done music all day, I don't even want to listen to music when I come home. I want silence. People don't understand that if they're not that person. I think the community people probably didn't cut him enough slack that way. Because I guess Francis Davis could do music 24 hours a day and be fine.²⁹ I don't know how he could. Well, if you only have one band class a day, or I don't know if he taught other things.³⁰ So he could still spend his time after school. But I think Stan understood some psychology things, or maybe that's why he started studying, you know, "How am I going to deal with life?" I think he realized too much of something isn't always a good thing. So he kind of made a point to not be a part of a lot of community stuff. I think that helped preserve his career so he didn't burn out. I think he did hit some burnout and went logging for a while. When he came back, he came back a little more, "You've got to protect the most valuable asset: me. I've got to protect me, because if I burn out there aren't other jobs." Self-preservation. And I think that was interpreted as, "Well, he doesn't care." So there may have been some rift there with the community. Some resentment. It came across as that. I heard that quite a bit from my mom from Dorothy.³¹ (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Fenton's political and religious views were not always aligned with those of the majority of community members. While he belonged to the same church as most of them, he was not as orthodox as most and did not hold all of the same strongly-conservative beliefs as many (S.

²⁹ Davis was a long-time music teacher who preceded Fenton.

³⁰ He did, including business and typing classes.

³¹ Meaning, he believed what his mother told him was probably in fact Higginson's own feelings telegraphed through her.

Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011). These differences in opinion came out in the classroom occasionally:

[Fenton] kind of enjoyed being the devil's advocate in the community. He'd get a kick out of that. And sometimes that would come out in his classes. He'd like to get the kids stirred up so they'd go home and stir the parents up. He would bait them and some of the things he'd say would go against what the leader of the church was teaching. He was trying to say, "Let's stay a little more to the middle." Or he'd go just to the other side of the middle to bring them back to the middle. I believe he enjoyed playing that role... He wanted me to be a free thinker. He wanted us to be free thinkers. And he was willing to make people upset. He was willing to let people hear what he thought. (J. Lambert, personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Fenton with other teachers. Generally speaking, there was often good rapport among the teachers, partly because of their collective longevity at DHS. Grant Mitchell, a teacher, explained it:

There for a long period of time it was the same teachers, I'd say for 10 or 15 years there wasn't any openings. And as a result, the camaraderie, the rapport that we had within our school between the teachers was really, really good. (personal communication, January 16, 2015)

Mr. Growden, who was the principal during a part of that period, also mentioned the cooperation between the teachers. He indicated that they worked better together than many other faculties he had worked with over the years. He even indicated that teachers were willing to sacrifice plans for their own programs to help solve a school-wide problem (T. Growden, personal communication, August 7, 2013). Fenton's willingness to adjust his program and even

introduce the trimester system appears to have stemmed from that same spirit of cooperation that existed among the faculty members during that period.

That same time period produced something that was remarkable in such a small school: a moderately successful band program, a thriving orchestra program, and championship athletic teams, all functioning simultaneously. I asked Frank Norton, a principal during the early 1990s (at the peak of this success curve), how that was possible. He responded:

Well, I think the main thing that happened, and I've said it a number of times and always will, is because of the advisors and the coaches.³² ... We were able to do those things with the same [pool of students]. A lot of times it was the same exact people. My kids were all-state basketball players, my girls were. My boys never did pull through very good for me, but they were always all-state people and they were always in the strings program and in the band program and participating in those things. And sometimes we had to pick them up from ball games and haul them up to the State Music Festival. You know, we had to do what we had to do to get them there. But that's about the only way you can do it is to have some really good advisors and some really good people involved. And then, hopefully, and our people ended up being this way, but hopefully they come to the realization that they only have x number of kids, and those x number of kids have got to be shared. They can't be split, they've got to be shared. And so when they came to the realization that they couldn't have them all to themselves, and they could share them around and we tried to make the time available so they could be in stuff, then they changed their outlook a little bit and everyone could still be successful. (personal communication, July 30, 2013)

³² Note that he rarely refers to the music educators as “teachers”, only as “advisors”. It may allude to his view of their role in the educational system at the school.

Sharing the students was not always easy for the teachers or for the students. Fenton remembered a particularly difficult year:

I know it was difficult for some of the students at times. I remember especially one of the years that I had to have band during lunch hour. Several students came early for an FFA [Future Farmers of America] leadership class before school, did all their morning classes, band during lunch, afternoon classes and then went right to basketball practice after school. They were going straight from 7:00 am to 7:30 pm. It was a hard deal for them and their parents. They made the commitment to keep up in their coursework and as I remember, that group all did very well academically. There were stories like that almost every year.

When a new teacher would come in and try to build a program each would find out how important it was to share. Just after girls basketball started up in the mid to late '70s, we got a fresh PE/Coach graduate who was going to build a girls basketball program at the expense of all else. The other teachers on the staff didn't have a chance to clue her in. Her team members and their parents beat us to it. She was a reluctant learner but finally came over from the dark side. (personal communication, August 6, 2015)

As discussed, after Fenton left the music classroom for the counselor's office, the music program struggled along under the direction of new teachers. I asked if it was hard for him to watch someone else manage what used to be his program. He replied,

It wasn't. I could...see the numbers fall off, the program diminishing. That was hard. But I was not in a position to say, "Here's what you need to do." I did that with them about as

often as I did with you, which was probably not at all.³³ (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

I asked Frank Norton, a long-time district employee who had been a teacher, a principal, and a technology director with 41 years of service behind him at retirement, why some employees stayed over the years and why others left after a short stint. His answer speaks to why Fenton may have successfully managed his program for so many years:

I think mostly, probably the ones that left probably left because they thought they could have more success somewhere else. I think maybe if a coach or a music teacher or someone that wants to make a really great program comes into a little dinky school and competes for the same kids with everybody's other programs, and finds that it's too much of a hassle to have to compete for the kids, and think they can be successful in what they want to do in a bigger school, tend to look to go to a bigger school... I think that some of our people decided they weren't going to be able to build the program they wanted at Dover High School because of a number of things including the number of people they had to choose from. They chose to go to a bigger place. (F. Norton, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Fenton with administrators. Mr. Fenton had a good relationship with many of his administrators, though some were less than supportive of him. The superintendent who hired him, Lance Hawkins, was often mentioned as being particularly helpful from the very beginning (Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011). Of their relationship, Fenton said,

Lance really took good care of me. He and I had an agreement early on, and I don't know of any other school teacher/superintendent who ever wed like this, but I says, "Lance, I

³³ A true statement—he never set foot in my classroom in an administrative role.

need a lot of instruments, but I won't ask for anything more than what I need.” He says, “Okay, we'll take care of you.” And he did. I never got turned down on anything, but he knew I wouldn't ever ask for anything I wouldn't need. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Upon returning to teaching after his two-year hiatus, Fenton was under the administration of Thomas Growden, who asked him to emphasize the choral part of the music program, as he and his wife were singers. Fenton did his best to make this happen, and even sometimes invited Growden and his wife to sing duets at the Christmas concerts. He felt Growden was supportive, and the program (especially the choir) thrived during his administration (S. Fenton, personal communication, December 10, 2011).

James Calder followed Mr. Growden. He remembered his work with Fenton fondly: I of course totally supported the music program in general. Stan was one of the most capable and intelligent people I have ever worked with in my life. He had a fabulous program and was very popular, very successful there... Stan was incredibly competent. And that part of our program was a huge success. Nothing but positive things to say about the music program and Stan... I just know that Stan was the greatest band director ever. And it's hard to get a good band director in a little town in the middle of nowhere with a small population. Very difficult to get a good band person. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Fenton with his family. Mr. Fenton had three children that he raised while teaching. He often involved his children in his musical activities in the community. He related,

My children would perform occasionally either with me or by themselves while they were still small, before they entered my program. A lot of the time it would be a novelty

number in a concert or church program with me playing guitar and them singing with me. That was always fun. Some Christmases we would go around town and sing to the old folks. I never did submit them to the experience of performing at a First National Bank function of any kind however. (personal communication, February 18, 2015)

He also taught his children in his music classes and other school classes. He was careful to point out that one of his children was also in Mrs. Higginson's program and took piano lessons from her. He was also careful to treat his children fairly in class and to do for other students what he did for his own children, though he may have pushed his children harder at home than he felt comfortable doing with his students (S. Fenton, personal communication, February 18, 2015). It appears to me that he consciously tried to strike a careful balance between being a father and being a teacher.

In the mid-1980, Fenton and his wife divorced. Informants indicated that his work likely affected their relationship. Justin Lambert, who was a student during that time, observed,

I think what he did in the '70s put his family second and he paid for it, and in kind of a way made music pay for it in the '80s. The time at the school and stuff, and his wife got interested in another man... And he may have thought that his career ruined his family life and marriage. I wonder about that. He was away so much. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Fenton tried his best to continue teaching well despite his personal upheaval. He explained how the divorce affected his life and his work:

It had a huge impact on me personally and with the family but I tried my very best to keep that part of my personal life out of my work at school. There, as in all places, I had my detractors and a few helpers. My biggest detractor at the time and for years after was

my principal (not James [Calder], he was very helpful and compassionate). He [the unnamed principal] not only didn't cut me any slack (which I never expected and certainly didn't want from him) but he was always on hand with a snide remark or subtle jab (personal email communication, August 25, 2015).

Kathleen Lind explained that not only did Fenton have to deal with the emotional impact of the divorce, but he also had to raise the kids on his own. As she explained, “I think a lot of times he really struggled. I mean when they got divorced his wife kind of didn't have much to do with the kids, either. So he kind of had full responsibility for the kids as well” (personal communication, January 14, 2015).

Fenton with equipment. While it is not technically possible to develop a personal relationship with an inanimate object, most musicians recognize that they have a relationship with their instruments. Mr. Fenton was no different. He had to deal with sub-par school instruments from the very beginning, including a lot of broken equipment (S. Fenton, personal communication December 10, 2011). He had to repair many of the instruments himself, a practice he described:

I remember one of the baritones. Ralph Lind...showed it to me and says, “I worked on this to kind of bring the valves back.” He'd taken some emery paper to the valves. He says, “It doesn't quite go up and down quite right.” And so I says, “Well, that's a good idea, Ralph.” What had happened was that one of the kids had dropped the valve on the floor and had put a dent in it. So those two edges of the dent, so he'd just taken some emery paper and sanded those off. I says, “Well, maybe we just need to sand a little bit more than you think we do.” So, we cleaned it up and made a horn for him. That's when

we coined the phrase of “Fentonizing” things. I Fentonized a lot of things here. (S. Fenton, personal communication December 10, 2011)

I observed evidence of the “Fentonization” when I first began working at the school. Early in my tenure, I decided to inventory the instruments and check their functionality (my own background in piano repair was helpful in this). I quickly noted that many of the instruments were of a different brand than their case. I also noted that valve buttons did not always match. There were some interesting solder repairs on several of the instruments. I learned later that Bill Lattimer, a local craftsman and jewelry maker, had completed a number of the silver solder repairs for Fenton (R. Lattimer, personal communication, February 28, 2015).³⁴

Mrs. Higginson’s Teaching Style

Elementary orchestra rehearsals were usually about 45 minutes per grade, usually held in the afternoons. Some years, depending on the high school’s schedule, the elementary rehearsals were held in the mornings (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015). This is telling of the support given to the program by the elementary school principal, because in my experience, most principals guard the morning hours very jealously as prime learning time for the “core” subjects.

Modeling was an important part of Mrs. Higginson’s teaching practice. I heard reports that she often played along on the piano (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015) or on the cello (C. Bestwick, personal communication, August 6, 2013). She very often accompanied the students on the piano (her primary instrument), from the elementary beginners all the way through the high school ensembles. Principal Norcott explained,

³⁴ Coincidentally, Lattimer’s son, David, later completed many repairs on school-owned string instruments for me after he began studying lutherie. That was somewhat ironic since he never was accepted into the orchestra program at DHS as a student because he lived out of the area during his fifth and sixth grade years.

She always played the piano. And so she might be, when the kids were first playing, she'd play the melody line and the kids would just play the chords. But the kids thought they were doing fantastic because you could recognize the tune of the song while Mrs. Higginson was playing the song. She always played the piano with the group. When she got older, well, sometimes she got an accompanist, but you know she generally just put the piano where the podium should have been and she'd just play the piano. She'd direct the kids while she'd play. She was an amazing lady. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Mr. Norcott was likely referring to Higginson's playing the piano during rehearsals. I spoke with Kathleen Lind, an able pianist in Dover, who stated that she often played the piano with the Mrs. Higginson's orchestras during their concerts. Lind explained the arrangement:

[Mrs. Higginson] would have me come over the week before the concert during the class period and have me work with them and then come and play during the concert. Because she would play during the rehearsals, you know, what they needed. Then I would just go over two or three days and come over during the concert so she could direct. Because she always had piano accompaniment with all the concerts... She always had piano for every single number for every concert. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

At least two students, Michelle Taylor and Justin Lambert, remembered Mrs. Higginson's rehearsals as being very intense. Students recognized Mrs. Higginson's intensity in rehearsal and tried to work as hard as they could. Michelle Taylor and I discussed her classroom demeanor:

Michelle: She got us playing right away. She didn't have us pick [play pizzicato] or anything. We just worked through the book. I remember her vibrato and we were

all amazed by it. She was a very serious teacher and that was one of my first impressions with her. She meant to make us into real musicians, I felt.

Me: You say she was a serious teacher. How did she express that in the classroom?

Michelle: Just the focus on the music. She kept busy, there was no down time, really. We worked, worked, worked so there wasn't time to mess around. So that's how I saw her as serious. She never really, I don't think she ever criticized us or anything. I don't remember her scolding too much. I just remember her working a lot with us. And I kind of felt like she had a mission, a passion for it. She wasn't there just to make money. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Lambert, who is now a music teacher, recalled the level of precision Higginson required: She was a perfectionist, where you didn't sight read just to sight read, but you've got to just polish stuff. It's what I call a “performing monkey”, where you can teach anyone to play a song really good... I think it's the drill a lot more until they get that measure or that run perfect, get fingers in the right place. So perfection of the music was the goal of that song we're going to play in a month. So it was spoon feeding. I think it was spoon feeding in the orchestra. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Discipline was strictly enforced in the orchestra. Justin Lambert remembered how it was in the high school orchestra:

Dorothy Higginson was more demanding [than Fenton]. And some people automatically equated that with a higher program. And she could get on you. She could let you know. She was strict that way. She'd vent her frustration. She wouldn't raise her voice. It was just, “No, that wasn't right. You know better than that.” I don't ever remember her yelling, not ever. It might have been more that I was intimidated because my mom put

her on such a high pedestal. I think a lot of people did. That you didn't want to disappoint Mrs. Higginson. It was kind of the feeling that you didn't want to disappoint her. So when she would say something it seemed to hit more. But I don't know if it was delivered any higher. I think a lot of us were kind of like, "We want to make her happy." (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Mr. Norcott, who as principal would have been responsible for potential discipline problems in the elementary program, rarely was required to do so. He explained that, "She wasn't opposed to calling your parents and saying, 'We need some help here.' She never came to the principal with discipline problems (O. Norcott, personal communication, June 12, 2012).

The strict discipline served to improve the overall quality of the orchestra by students self-selecting to leave the orchestra if they didn't like it. Lambert recalled,

[Her formality and high expectations] probably served to weed out kids that would have pulled the program down. You know, her way about it. If someone wasn't practicing or someone wasn't, you know, you did have a problem, and she did talk with you and your parents and she did say, "This isn't working." And so I think that contributed to the high quality. If you couldn't cut orchestra you could always go to band. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Even with the intensity in rehearsal, which was perhaps more evident at the high school level (former students had a tendency to remember more from the later years of instruction), Mrs. Higginson tried to balance her intent focus with more enjoyable activities in the classroom. Mr. Norcott went to orchestra class with his fourth graders for several years. When I asked him what it was like to be in her classroom, he gushed,

It was fun. It was always fun. And...the kids would always set goals. And if you practiced so much you got a little prize. I've got a lapel pin that's got two eighth notes on it. I wish I could remember what the stipulations were. Each year there was something different. But she would always come in with something for the kids and make a thing. We'd have charts and competitions to see who could get the most. And she had prizes for all the kids. It was always fun. There was never a dull thing. And at Christmas time, first year strings, that have only been in orchestra since August, they can't do anything, but she always made sure we had a couple Christmas songs.

She always, she made it fun. It was never a matter of, "Okay, we're going to practice the chords." Although we did the chords,³⁵ and we did the drills, and we did our warm-ups. But there was always fun things. And sometimes she'd say, "Okay, kids, put your instruments away. We're just going to sing." And they'd look at her like she was kind of crazy. But she'd say, "Singing's a part of it." And so sometimes we would sing the song and then we would play the song after we sang it.

Halloween she'd always come dressed up in costume. She'd come with a costume. Sometimes when it was a composer's birthday she would highlight that composer. And I'm sure she did a lot more of those kinds of things that I didn't see in high school. But at the elementary it was always fun. I can't remember now what the contest was. There was always practicing, and maybe we had to listen to so much music. I can't remember what it was. It was something in the field of music we got points for. And any time we got points you got to pick a different prize. It might be a music pencil; it might be, you know, something. But it was just kind of fun. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

³⁵ I believe he meant "strings", but I'm not certain. He could have been referring to open-string chords.

That balance of fun and intensity seems to have helped win students to Higginson's cause. Justin Lambert was a student in both the band and the earliest days of the orchestra at DHS. He compared Mrs. Higginson's style to Mr. Fenton's:

Now, she was more strict [than Fenton], she was more toe the line. But it was kind of funny because everybody loved her, too. I don't know if Stan Fenton and Dorothy Higginson saw eye-to-eye music-wise very much, and they'd probably both admit it. Because they're different. But Dorothy still had a fun part with her. We had parties on the side. I remember her making Dutch oven, but she had it in a wheelbarrow (I guess to prevent burning). She had dirt in the wheelbarrow. And so she'd cook Dutch oven and stuff, and I was like, "She can cook Dutch oven?" I didn't expect that from her. Just perfect music from Mrs. Higginson. That was fun. We had some parties I can remember. I was probably more on the fun side in there, goofing around, and she was patient with me. I just loved it in there playing bass. And I had Tommy Blackham who was a year younger than me, and I think we were kind of the comedians of the group. And she allowed us to a point. She'd look at my mom and my mom looked at me (My mom played piano when it started. She was the accompanist.). But we got to play, [and] it reached a real high quality. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Mrs. Higginson had a remarkable ability to play by ear, but she was insistent that students also learn how to read staff notation. I had wondered if she used a more aural approach, like Suzuki's, based on her own aural abilities. Kathleen Lind quickly informed me that was not the case, and that she was very bothered by the aural approach when a later teacher used it (personal communication, January 14, 2015). The orchestra played music from a variety of sources,

including method books and published arrangements. Sometimes they would play from Mrs. Higginson's own manuscripts, as Mr. Norcott explained:

A lot of times she'd write the music herself. She'd write the music because she couldn't find something that taught a particular concept or a particular theory that she was teaching at the time, so she'd write her own music to do that. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

In the elementary school, students worked out of method books. By high school, he students themselves were given some degree of input into what they played. Michelle Taylor recalled,

In high school I remember we would listen to a lot of music together and we would choose our own songs. I remember her asking, "What do you guys want to play?" And we chose Pachelbel's *Canon in D*. We did play a lot of classical music. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Mrs. Higginson often worked with small groups before or after school as they needed help. Mr. Norcott recalled,

There would be times when she would just take two or three students at a time, and she would come before school and come after school and she'd call the parents: "I want to keep these kids after school." And she'd take three or four violinists and work with them and then she might have some cellos in the afternoon. And she was so concerned, "I'm worried about Tommy. He's just not doing this." And so she'd go on her own time and work with him individually. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Mrs. Higginson was very particular about the preparation of her performances, expecting things to be performed at a very high level. Kathleen Lind, who was her accompanist for many years, remembered some of her first times working with Higginson:

In those first years that I would go up there and be her accompanist, it was intimidating. She wanted things just right, and there were some times I would just think, “Hold back the tears, she's not meaning this personally.” Because you knew that she wanted it to be just so with her. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

While Michelle Taylor spoke very highly of Mrs. Higginson and her teaching, she was disappointed somewhat by the lack of instruction on instrument tuning. She recalled:

[Mrs. Higginson] would tune every instrument. I don't think she taught us to tune. I still struggle with tuning. But when she'd get there she'd tune every instrument... [In high school] some people would tune their own, and eventually we would, but pretty much if you didn't have your instrument tuned she'd just grab it and tune it really fast. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

Justin Lambert also remembered the tuning procedure, and also described more of the details of a typical rehearsal:

In orchestra, the practices, usually she would tune your string instrument while we were eating lunch. She would go around and tune, which I can understand with orchestra, that's a totally different beast, tuning strings. I know as teachers, especially at the beginning level, you just have to go tune them. And she'd have the tape across so you'd get the fingers in the right place. We'd work a lot on the bowing. I remember working a lot on the bowing from the beginning, and getting strong tone and boy was she a stickler for

hand position, proper posture. You could get away with quite a bit in band, you know, foot-up trombone. But not in orchestra. You had your hand just right and things.

And if we didn't get it right we did it again. If we didn't get a measure right we did it again. And she'd single out people. "You need to work on that. Let's hear that." We did work on scales. Quite a bit of scale work in orchestra. Dynamics. We'd do lots of drills on crescendo and things like that. A lot more attention to detail. And we didn't get through as many songs. We didn't play as many songs. I think in that, we had what, 40 minutes during lunch, and 10 of it was eating lunch. So usually we'd only get through one song, one and a half, two songs max. But we would work sections instead of play through. She'd even have us separate out in sectionals a little bit, spread us out on the stage to the edges, basses way back in the corner. And she'd come around and work with our sections, and my mom [the accompanist] would help with one group. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Mrs. Higginson's Relationships with Others

Higginson with students. Mrs. Higginson appears to have been a keen observer of people and knew how to help students based on their individual personalities. Consider the case of Mr. Norcott's daughter, Tammy:

Mrs. Higginson...knew our girls. She knew that our youngest one, Tammy, she was a knothed. Our oldest one was very serious and very into music and so she was always giving her Chopin or Rachmaninoff or something [as her piano teacher]. She was always in the classics. But she knew that wasn't going to be Tammy's cup of tea. And I thought, "I don't know what she's going to do with this kid." But when she got her at that age where it looked like we were going to lose her in the strings program she started doing

western music with her, fiddling music. And it was funny because we had gone to Tennessee with the kids when they were little, and we had gone in the State Capitol building in Tennessee and there was a fiddle hanging there on the wall and our daughter, she was only seven or eight, and she looked at that and asked, “What's the difference between a violin and a fiddle?” And the guy said, “Very good question.” He said, “A violin you carry in a case and a fiddle you carry in a gunny sack.” And she just laughed and laughed. And Mrs. Higginson knew that, so she got her into fiddling music because that was her thing. And she got really good in fiddling. (O. Norcott, personal communication, June 12, 2012)

In another instance, Mr. Norcott’s son Roger was cut from the basketball team. As Mr. Norcott explained,

In a place like this, basketball is the only thing. If you can't play basketball, you can't do anything. And Mrs. Higginson said, “That's okay, Roger. We'll make it.” And she took him under her wing and music was his salvation. Music gave him something he could do. It was an individual activity that he could do on his own and he could play as a group, and it saved him. It saved him. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Mrs. Higginson made an effort to involve everyone, regardless of ability or disability.

Mr. Norcott gave an example of a boy with a malformed arm at the school:

She looked at that, and I said, “What are we going to do with Ronnie?” And she said, “Well...” And I don't know which of the hands was crippled. No, it was the right hand. It was the hand that it needed to be, because it was the one that he bowed with. Anyway, she took him and she was able to work with him and she was able to get him to, he was able to do it. Ron was able to do it. There was not a student that she couldn't somehow

figure out a way for him to play. Special needs, you name it. And she just had a way of building the kids so everybody wanted to be in strings. And I think that does a lot to build a program. When the kids are enthused about it, the parents are enthused about it.

(personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Students were supportive of Mrs. Higginson's program. Most of the students I interviewed indicated that it was because they enjoyed the music they were creating and the process of getting there (e.g. M. Taylor, personal communication, August 2, 2013). Even Mr. Bestwick, who did not always tell me flattering stories of Higginson, admitted:

She was very dedicated and there all the time. She didn't skip out. And she would spend time after school with them with their violins and cellos, and the kids just really liked the product she was turning out. So the program just kept getting bigger and bigger. She'd play along with them. She played cello. But she was very dedicated, spent the time and put out a very good product, so kids wanted to be there. Seemed like just in a half year she had beginners playing wonderfully. I don't know how she did it. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Students respected Mrs. Higginson. As Mr. Norcott observed, "You just didn't have discipline problems with Mrs. Higginson. She just demanded respect, just by her air" (personal communication, June 12, 2012). Kathleen Lind described what she observed through her time as an accompanist for the orchestra:

I was up there with the orchestra for all those years, and I never saw anybody disrespect her. You know how high school kids will disrespect teachers and whatnot. I never saw anybody disrespect her. But like I say, it was about the kids. And I think the kids knew that she really cared about them. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

Michelle Taylor, a student from the late 1990s, described her respect for her teacher: Mrs. Higginson was my idol. I don't know why, but she made me want to be the best musician in the world. I would practice every day, and when my dad wouldn't let me get my instrument out because it was too late I would practice in bed for her. I don't know how she elicited that from me but I really wanted to please Mrs. Higginson. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

If students had unique needs, Mrs. Higginson was often perceptive of them and helped them solve their problems in appropriate ways. Michelle Taylor's family was very large, with a very modest income. However, she loved to play the cello and the piano. Mrs. Higginson helped her with solos from time to time. Michelle related how Mrs. Higginson took care of some of her needs:

Once I told her that I really wanted to learn the third movement to *Moonlight Sonata*, the really fast one, and she just bought that for my birthday one year. And then once she saw my cello case was starting to fray and my instrument was starting to fall out and I said, "I'm going to make myself a hot pink cello case." And then she just bought one and had me work for it at her home doing housework. Never did get a hot pink cello case. But I learned how to clean my first bathroom from her. (personal communication, August 2, 2013)

On another occasion, Higginson provided Michelle musical opportunities that she may have never had otherwise.

Once, in fact twice she took me, because she knew how passionate I was and how much I wanted to please her, she took me to a symphony to hear my first symphony of my life, when the symphony came to Marietta and she took me. And she took me to an outdoor

amphitheater and showed me a cellist play “Flight of the Bumblebee”. I'll never forget that. (M. Taylor, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

While Mrs. Higginson was generally very kind to all of the students, there was at least one situation that bothered a student’s parent about her treatment of a child. Rita Lattimer explained what happened:

When Bill was gone to the Gulf War, David was in the fourth grade and he really wanted to take strings. I didn't know how long we were going to be here and I wouldn't let him. And when we came back [several years later] she wouldn't take him [because he hadn't started earlier]. (personal communication, February 28, 2015)

It is impossible to know Mrs. Higginson’s side of the story now, but the situation really bothered the parents, as David was very, very interested in playing in the orchestra. Tellingly, as an adult he went on to purchase a cello, take private lessons at a university and even became a luthier, building a violin and a viola before beginning studies at medical school.

Higginson with administrators. Mrs. Higginson enjoyed the unwavering support of Mr. Norcott, the elementary school principal. This story demonstrates how willing he was to support her work:

Well, what happened was when I became principal, she said, “I'm having a hard time with this class.” And I said, “Then I'll just come to orchestra with you.” And she said, “I can't just have you sitting back in the back. I'll feel like you're evaluating me every period.” And she said, “Why don't we do this. Why don't you pick an instrument and I'll rearrange the orchestra so that you can be in there.” And I said, “Alright. I'll just take cello.” My son was living away from home, and I wrote and said I wanted to use, to borrow his cello. And he wrote back and said, “I'd really rather you didn't.” I said,

“Okay.” So I said, “He won't let me borrow the cello. I'm not really into violins and violas. My fingers are too fat.” And she said, “Let's put you on the string bass.” And so she brought her string bass from home for me to play and she put me in the back with the basses so I could supervise that back row of kids and she could supervise the front row of kids, because that particular class that year was a real handful for both of us. But with two of us in there we both survived. And so it just became habit. So I had five years of first-year strings because I would come in every year with my string students. (O. Norcott, personal communication, June 12, 2012)

At some point, the Dover Elementary School Parent Teacher Association decided to change the school's colors and mascot. Mrs. Higginson saw an opportunity to help out with the transition. As Mr. Norcott explained,

So we just got our new mascot and whatever, and this was a Friday. And she said, “You need a school song.” And I said, “Yeah, we do.” And she said, “What's your mascot?” And I said, “It's a tiger.” And she said, “Okay.” Monday she came back and she said, “I want you to hear this song and see what you think.” She never changed it. And so she copyrighted it and we printed it and she let us sell that music and put that music back into the school fund. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

The success of the orchestra program ensured its long-term place in the curriculum because of the community expectation it created. Frank Norton, principal at DHS during the early 1990s, summarized the situation:

When I was administrator it worked out really well because we had the tradition, we knew there were certain things we had to do, and the community was not going to put up with us if we didn't make some kind of a schedule that would include options for music.

As long as you have options. If we would have tried to eliminate the music program or any of the arts programs, we would have had a difficult time. (personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Mr. Norton tried to be as supportive as possible. Even with that, he recognized that there were conflicts over money and funding:

The main conflict was with music and sports. And the main complaints in relationship to sports was that the sports always had more money than the music program. And the music people would point out that they needed this money and the sports people would point out that they make their own money in the ball games and ticket sales and those kind of things, and it seems like it's always easier to get a booster club for sports than it is to get a booster club for music. And we had those same issues, and you just have to work around those the best you can with those programs, try to make them work out, try to make sure things are adequate. I don't think we ever had the equipment and the instruments and stuff for the music program that was ever equivalent to the same kinds of things we had with sports. Like I said, they made a little more money than we could charge people to come to the music. So it was hard. But the district was supportive, and I feel like I was supportive of the music program. But that's just my opinion. But I had personal reason to be supportive of it with my family involved in it so much. (F. Norton, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

I asked Mr. Norton about his working relationship with Mrs. Higginson, and if there were ever any problems. His biggest concern was with her time demands on the students. He explained,

Well, my theory was that if you've got the right people you don't have to be too much involved with straightening them out because they know what they want and how to make their program good. And by the time I was Mrs. Higginson's administrator, she had created a really good tradition and a really good program in the area and at Dover High School. So the conflict that we had, more than anything else, was just a little bit of personality. And it really had nothing to do with the school situation at all. It was more or less how much, you know if you're going to be good as an advisor in any program, you've got to demand the best you can from your students. And she demanded the best she could from hers, and the coaches were demanding the best from them, and Mr. Fenton was demanding the same of them, and that includes time and practice and all of those things. And so as a parent and an administrator I was caught with the time issue and a little bit of the personality issue with Mrs. Higginson because she was a perfectionist. Music people are weird anyways to start with, and good advisors—I was lucky to have good advisors in the school—and good advisors, they demand a lot of things out of the kids because they want good programs. The only way to you can make a good program. (F. Norton, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

The music program impressed administrators not only in the local district, but also in surrounding districts. Mr. Norton explained what he heard in talking with other local administrators:

I felt like we probably had the best [music programs] in the region, and so did most of the principals. And we have had discussions both individually and as groups, not on boards, but as groups of two or three principals, that would ask us how we do it. How we do it? How does Dover High have such a good program? And the things we've talked about

here were the things I had to tell them. And a lot of the things they were faced with had to do with the conflicts of interest between the different sports programs and music, particularly those two. And they weren't able to get it worked out very successfully.

There are other schools in the region that have had good programs but I just don't know that they've had as good a program as Dover High School has over such a span of time.

(personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Higginson with equipment. Mrs. Higginson was very concerned about getting quality instruments for her students and was willing to help them select instruments from local dealerships or other sources. One of my favorite stories came from Mr. Norcott described one of Higginson's sources of used instruments and how she helped parents find instruments that fit their budgets:

I think with Mrs. Higginson, the thing that was most impressive to me, was that we were a small school and didn't have much money. And so she would go to, she was a real classy lady, a real, real classy lady. Very prim and very proper. And so when she came in one day with a violin she had bought at a pawn shop (now my interpretation of pawn shops isn't something where a classy lady would go). But she would go into pawn shops, she would go into second-hand music stores, she would go into Salvation Army stores, wherever she could. And she had such a key of music, she could pluck a couple strings and tell you whether the instrument was any good or not. And she would buy these as we went along. I know one parent was so excited: they had bought one from, I don't know whether it was Montgomery Ward, Sears Catalogue, one of the catalogues, and they were so excited because they only paid fifty or sixty dollars for that instrument. And she said,

“I wouldn't dare tell that parent, but they really got taken to the cleaners. It's not worth that.” Because she knew. She knew. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Besides helping families locate instruments, Mrs. Higginson also spent a great deal of money purchasing instruments from her personal funds to provide them to students who couldn't afford their own. Mr. Norcott explained,

We were able with our grant to buy a few instruments. I wish I could give you an exact number. But we were able to buy a few of the instruments. But the majority of the instruments...We needed a string bass. So she bought us a string bass. My son, we had bought him a half-size cello because looking at my size she figured that's all he would ever, I guess it was a 3/4 size cello.³⁶ Well,...by the time he got in middle school, then he was just wrapping his whole body around that cello. And so we needed a new cello. And she had done this same thing with my oldest daughter. She thought she wouldn't get much taller than I was, so we bought a medium size viola. Well, she grew out. And so [I told her], “If there's somebody in the orchestra that can use this, let me know.” And she said, “No, I'll take it.” So she bought my violin and she bought my cello, which gave me the down payment for the new one. And she just bought it out of her own pocket. And then she would take those in turn and just rent them to the students.

I dare say, 80% of the instruments we had, and I'm just guessing, but I'll bet it was 80% of the instruments we had were instruments that Mrs. Higginson bought herself. She had cellos, she had violas, she had violins, and she had violins from half size all the way up... She would take her entire salary and she would use that to buy instruments for the kids...And as the time went on, sometimes the parents would sell their own instruments

³⁶ Mr. Norcott is quite small.

when they traded up. And Mrs. Higginson of course would buy those and then would rent them for, oh gosh, I think it was two or three dollars a month, they could rent it from the school. And we tried to collect [the money] and at the end of the year. We would figure up what we had so we could give it to Mrs. Higginson, and lots of times we gave her money and lots of times she didn't get too much. But she would, in turn, take that money and buy more instruments. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Many families didn't have enough money to purchase separate instruments for older and younger siblings. With the large families that are common in Dover that could mean three or four children sharing the same instrument. Mr. Norcott explained how Mrs. Higginson solved the problem:

She would have somebody at the elementary playing an instrument, and then she would take 15 or 20 instruments from the elementary up to the high school. And then she'd take the high school instruments back to the elementary. So a Hayford might have an instrument but they'd be using it both at the high school and at the elementary. And she would cart that instrument back and forth between the two schools... So that old string bass had to be carted back and forth and back and forth every day because it was the only one we had until we were able to pick up some more.

And so the concerts were a joke. And there were a couple of times where we had Dover-wide music concerts. And we set up at the high school and the entire music program would play from fourth grade up. And I'll tell you, those nights were a nightmare, trying to shuffle the instruments and trying to make sure the right kids had the right instruments. But she could program that and could organize that to make it work. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

When she retired, Mrs. Higginson left the majority of her personally owned instruments to the school. Mr. Norcott explained that conversation:

Her attitude was, when she left, she just said, “The instruments are yours.” She kept a few for her grandkids. She kept a cello and a few for her grandkids to use so they wouldn't have to buy them, but the majority of her instruments she just left to the school. She said, “That's just my gift.” And I kept saying, “You can't do this. It's not fair for you to use Timothy's money on.” And she said, “There's not one penny of Timothy's money. This is my money.” Timothy supported her, and she supported the strings program. Between her piano lessons and her strings program, she supported the program.³⁷ (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Higginson with her family. Mrs. Higginson's family had an interesting relationship. Timothy, her husband, was not musical, but was supportive of her work with the orchestra students:

[Timothy] was a very super quiet, very quiet person. Just was the farmer that took care of the farm and watched [basketball]. But he was always to her concerts, he was always there. And he would always go home [immediately after the concert] because he knew she would stay there. (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015)

Her oldest daughter, Susan, was very musical, playing in the high school band as well as learning the piano and cello from her mother. She later went on to earn multiple degrees in music performance and music education, and is currently teaching strings in a neighboring rural district. I asked her if she ever felt like all of the musical activities were stealing her mother

³⁷ Timothy Higginson was Dorothy's husband.

away. She replied with a definite yes, and that her sister probably felt even more that way, as she was not as musically inclined as Susan (S. Andrews, personal communication, June 7, 2012).

Higginson with the community. Mrs. Higginson had formed a strong relationship with the community long before she returned to teaching in the public schools, as described in an earlier section. She continued to reach out to the community once she was back in the schools and continued to direct the Grace Notes choir. Mrs. Higginson was also providing music for events in the community and encouraging her students to do the same. Kathleen Lind related,

Another thing she did was she was always asked to do music for weddings or different things and she always got students involved with that. But she would never let anybody pay anything because she said that is how you teach kids to give service through their talents. So she would never take money for anything she ever did. Ever.

... I could go down a list of all the different students who did that with her. I know that she took Anthony and Micah quite often to go play. There were people that would do weddings down there at [the local art gallery] and they would want a quartet or something and she would, Anthony and Micah went with her down there. I know they went a few times out to [a large animal rescue ranch] to places out there and did music for weddings. I just thought, Yay! This is a great thing to teach kids: service, using your talents, and that was a big thing for her in the community. She was involved in many ways that way. (personal communication, January 14, 2015)

The community as a whole held Mrs. Higginson in a place of respect. I rarely heard anyone refer to her as anything than “Mrs. Higginson.” One community member explained her place in an interesting way:

Our Postmaster retired and they got a temporary one there, and I went in there one time, and she said, “Will you help me? I just got a letter for Mrs. Higginson.³⁸ How am I supposed to know which one?” And I said, “Well then put it in Mrs. Higginson's box.” “Well, which Mrs. Higginson?” I said, “There's only one. There's Karen, there Margaret, there's Mary, but there's only one Mrs. Higginson. It's Timothy Higginson’s wife. Just put it in Timothy Higginson’s box.” “Well, how do you know?” “Well, there's only one Mrs. Higginson.” (O. Norcott, personal communication, June 12, 2012)

While she was teaching at the elementary school, Mrs. Higginson was approached by several different adults that were interested in learning to play. Mr. Norcott explained, Our strings program was just beginning and some of the older people in the community says, “You know, I've always wanted to play the strings.” And so Mrs. Higginson said, “If you wouldn't mind playing with the kids, come along.” So our grandson's grandmother, must have been in her late 70s, started playing. Bishop Button's wife, Mary, started playing. Grant Mitchell's mother started playing. She must have had seven or eight of these senior citizens, anywhere from 25 to 30 years old up to 75 and 80 years old. They came and actually played. And then she would let them progress. When they got pretty good with the third graders, she'd move them up to the fourth graders, the fifth, the sixth graders, until she had them playing at the high school. And they never became fantastic virtuosos, you know, as far as that goes, but she involved them all. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

Mrs. Higginson found ways to involve community members however she could. Mr. Norcott explained,

³⁸ Higginson is a common last name in the area.

She was always reaching out to the community and bringing it in. And that has an impact on the schools. Because when parents go to a Third of August program or a Christmas program or whatever, and their kids are performing, and she's bringing them in to perform as well, doing a reading or a vocal number or whatever, then the program becomes a community program and not just a school program that's going to die as soon as you move out and leave Dover. (personal communication, June 12, 2012)

While most community members I interviewed spoke very highly of Mrs. Higginson, it was not a universally-shared opinion. Mr. Fenton and Mr. Bestwick took issue with her on several issues, as will be discussed below. Bill Lattimer was the only other person who spoke ill of her. He struggled with her personality:

She had a bit of a music ego. She put a lot of people off. People that were a little more down to earth and easy going about stuff, they were put off by her. And she wasn't afraid to...turn up her nose at you and walk away.... I could not have dated one of her daughters because I had a motorcycle and a hot rod. It just would not have been allowed. Not that I would have. [I was the same age as her daughter] Susan. But they let me haul Susan back and forth from college so they didn't have to get her a car. (personal communication, February 28, 2015)

Even considering these few negative comments, Higginson's overall relationship with the community was solid. Community members took note of the long-term impact made by the school music programs. Said one parent,

I think, well, I'm confident, that we've sent more people out into the world and into families that have been successful parents and grandparents because of what they learned in music as opposed to what they learned in math and science or sports or anything else.

And we've had good ones of all of those. But my opinion is if you can get involved in the music program, it carries into your life and your family life, and influences the things that happen there better than any of these other things do. I just don't see people sitting around saying, "Well, let's have you get up and quote, do some math calculations for us." But we do say, "Do the piano for us or play the violin for us." And so I think the music program has been a really good program in our community. (F. Norton, personal communication, July 30, 2013)

Mr. Fenton and Mrs. Higginson

As intimated previously, the relationship between Mr. Fenton and Mrs. Higginson was a complicated one. Participants' comments demonstrate that their personalities were very different, an insight supported by my own observations. Mrs. Higginson was very formal in nearly everything she did: how she carried herself, how she dressed and composed herself, how her house looked, how she addressed others, her musical taste, and the level of preparation demonstrated by her music students. She was often addressed or spoken of as "Mrs. Higginson" by any community members whom I have encountered. Mr. Fenton was very respectful of her, and spoke highly of her musicianship:

She's an absolute sweetheart, and a rare, rare musician. She has more perception on what it takes to create music and make it sound like it really ought to sound, as about anybody I've ever seen. Beyond university level in perception and feel and of course there's no letup... You know, there's a right way to do things, and that's it. You don't do it unless you do it right. And the right way, ordinarily, is [her] way. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Mr. Fenton, on the other hand, is often called by his first name (at least now—I don't have record of that usage while he was teaching). While he is a talented musician, his musical tastes are much more relaxed, as is his demeanor. Fenton reported to me the details of his first meeting with Mrs. Higginson:

When I first met Dorothy, they owned the Dover Motel, which was where Wally's [the local grocery store] is now, and she and her husband, Timothy, and two of her daughters, Susan and Violet, were always active in all the music programs here...

Mr. Hawkins introduced me to her, and she didn't say, "Hello, glad to meet you." It's not, "Nice that we have a music teacher." She says, "Do you do strings?" And, I've always been a bit of a smartass, and I'm sorry, but I am, and I said, "Yeah, I do a little guitar." And she went, "Humph!" She drew up, and we had a conversation, but it took Dorothy a while to warm up to me. Eventually, she took some guitar lessons from me and bought her own guitar, and we really had a great time. We've been fast and famous friends for a long time. I just think the world of Dorothy. (personal communication, December 10, 2011)

Even with that respect and reported friendship, apparently some friction existed between them. I asked several of my participants, especially those who were close to either or both of them, to describe the relationship between Higginson and Fenton. Mr. Bestwick related this example:

Me: Did she and Stan get along alright?

Mr. Bestwick: No, not really. At least on Stan's end. He's just jealous. Her program went up while his went down.

Me: Was there open confrontation?

Mr. Bestwick: No, he just b****ed to me. I don't know if anybody else, but I got an earful. I'm sure he went in to the office. But one thing, he just wasn't putting the time in, and everybody knew it. That wasn't just my opinion, that was everybody's opinion. (personal communication, August 6, 2013)

Despite any differences, Mrs. Higginson often included Mr. Fenton in the Grace Notes program, performing on trumpet or guitar. Rehearsals for those performances revealed some details about their relationship, as told by Kathleen Lind:

They had a relationship that was fun to watch. You know, being the accompanist for Grace Notes for all those years, and he would come, they would go at each other in a fun way. But they had a respect for each other in that way.

You know, Mrs. Higginson would make little comments. The thing that bothered her about him was that for her, you rehearse and rehearse and you make it perfect. For him, he'll blow in for one practice, play it with us once, "Well, that sounded pretty good, I think we're good, Mrs. Higginson, thank you." And you could just see that little grin on her face, thinking, "Well, at least we got him here for that much." And he would pull it off, you know. But to her, it would be, "I told him to be here." But it was fun to watch their interaction...

They really did have a respect for each other. He liked to harass her a little bit, and she could give it right back to him. She was pretty funny. She had a side to her. (K. Lind, personal communication, January 14, 2015).

I asked one former student if she thought Fenton ever felt slighted by all the attention lavished on Mrs. Higginson. She replied:

I never thought that. I did know that they were opposites in personality. But I never felt, I just thought they were just different. I don't think so. She invested in it and he didn't and I don't think he expected any more than he invested. He did invest, but not after-school hours like she did. He was a great teacher. I don't think he was jealous. I think he was annoyed that she was so fastidious and he was so laid back, but I thought that was more personality than personal offense. (M. Taylor, personal communication, August 2, 2013)

At least one former student perceived some conflict. Justin Lambert was in both Fenton's and Higginson's classes, so he had a good opportunity to observe both of them. He recalled:

No, I don't think they got along. I don't think there was much love lost there. I know that Mrs. Higginson felt that Stan could have been a lot higher quality with the program, and Stan was like, "It is what it is and I've got to try and educate the average person, not just the top musician." And so their focuses were different I think. (personal communication, July 15, 2013)

Mr. Norton, as principal during the 1990s, noticed that there was some conflict between the two music teachers, but noted that each did well in their respective venues:

There was a little conflict there, it seems like. And Mr. Fenton had a very good band program. There were some kids that really did well there. In fact, Justin Lambert has grown from that program and has made a great program in Brighton...

Now, there was some conflict between them, and there was some conflict a little bit in scheduling, to make sure they had the time for it. But we had two very good people. And when you have two very good people, you try to make sure that they can build the kind of program the best they can. So there were some scheduling issues we had to work out, but we made sure there was always something in the schedule the kids could choose.

And not everybody's going to be a violinist and some of them might want to play a trumpet or a drum. And so you let them do it. (personal communication, July 30, 2013)

While Mr. Norton said there was “a little conflict” regarding the scheduling, Fenton saw it in a different light, and did not speak kindly of Mr. Norton’s treatment of the band side of the music department. He sent me a copy of the schedule from one year, along with his interpretation of it:

[The schedule] shows what I mentioned in the letter of [my] trying various tactics to keep as many kids in band and chorus as possible even to the point of not offering band all year. That was tough but I didn’t feel we had much choice nor did I feel that the overall skill level of the band slipped all that much. You will also notice that in this year, as in all of the years, Mrs. Higginson had her orchestra classes not only where she wanted them but with as little competition as possible. (S. Fenton, personal communication, March 30, 2015)

In a subsequent communication with me, he was much more direct about how he perceived the situation:

She was a master manipulator. I guess what I failed to do in the community was to show everyone that I was suffering for my art. A good martyr goes to all extents to bleed for their art and let it be known that everything is done as voluntary work (it wasn't) and is so incredibly expensive and time-consuming but that the end product of being able to parade all these wonderful budding musicians in front of the locals—at great personal expense both financially, medically, time consumed, etc.— and bask in the resplendent glory of being the only person in the world capable of bringing such a wondrous thing to pass.

Any time there was a question of being able to schedule strings classes when she wanted

them, or looked at the possibility of reduced funding or other competing maladies, the pathetic cry of the day would always be unleashed: “I just don't know how I can carry on...” That applied to not getting the choice students at the choice time of day, the funding for everything requested, getting rid of the kinds of kids who filled the band and chorus—who challenged her in any way—or if a student wanted to drop orchestra and take chemistry to help them get a higher ACT score, it was always the same: “I just don't know how I can carry on if...” It got to be a joke with a few of the staff who had the wherewithal to figure it out. (Chet Bestwick and I had an especially fun time with that. There were many things we encountered that we just didn't know how we could carry on if conditions weren't immediately changed.) The funny thing is that it worked. The big cry from the community (only a few individuals in reality) was, “Oh what will we ever do if Mrs. Higginson should quit? We've just got to find a way to keep her,” which translated into, “Give her whatever she wants.” It was not exactly a short list. (S. Fenton, personal communication, May 17, 2015)

Despite all of the challenges and negative personal feelings that Fenton evidently experienced because of what Mrs. Higginson did, he insisted that they kept their interpersonal relationship on a friendly, if professional, timbre:

I never did feel much friction between the programs or between Mrs. Higginson and myself. We had worked together for long enough to understand the inherent parameters. I played and sang quite a few solos for a variety of her programs—both orchestra and Grace Notes—through the years and she was always very helpful with playing accompaniments for some of my students when the accompaniments were a bit “ambitious” (her word for “hard as h***”) for me or any of the other local pianists. In

short, she and I both worked on getting along and as you have been told, we survived because we both understood that we had to share. (S. Fenton, personal communication, August 6, 2015)

Conclusion

All of the different people involved with the Dover Schools music programs created a culture that provided a music education to a wide spectrum of students in that rural community over the time period described here. While there were differences in the approaches of different teachers, administrators, and students, it seems that it worked to a degree that students' lives were enriched in lasting ways.

The music program at Dover High School and Dover Elementary School provided students with a rich musical experience spanning from the youngest grades to graduation. It offered them instruction on orchestra and band instruments, fretted instruments, and voice. The most remarkable part of the story is that it occurred in a school system of fewer than 400 students and has continued for more than 50 years with only brief interruptions.

The following chapter will address more of the insights I gained in depth. Specifically, I will address the place of the music program in the community, the successes and failures of the programs and individuals, and ideas gleaned from this project that could help me or other teachers improve their practice.

Chapter 5: Analysis, Insights, and Personal Applications

The previous chapter contained voluminous data collected from a host of informants. The resulting historical ethnography was constructed to provide a rich description of the Dover music program over time, using the words of the informants themselves. In this chapter, I will provide an interpretation of those data, exploring my perceptions of the different strengths and weaknesses of the program, and how I have improved (or plan to improve) my own teaching practice as a result of this completing this study. In the process, I will answer the primary research questions stated in Chapter 3. I also will discuss other insights that emerged in the course of writing Chapter 4. As all of the discussion in this chapter stems from sources cited previously, formal citation in this chapter will be very minimal.

Why Some Teachers Stayed and Others Left

One of my primary research questions was to explore why some music teachers stayed in Dover for a long time while others did not last long. For example, Mrs. Higginson and Mr. Fenton each had tenures lasting approximately 15 and 30 years, respectively, yet Mr. Speer, Mr. Clark, and Mr. Watson lasted only one year each. The following are some possible answers to that question.

Competence. With the exception of Mrs. Higginson, all of the aforementioned teachers had teaching degrees (though Mr. Watson's degree was not in music). Mr. Speer had completed most of a master's degree before he came to Dover, and everyone in Dover spoke very highly of his musical and even instructional abilities, especially with the marching band, yet he was unsuccessful with the students. Mr. Clark was a very able guitarist, though he was not able to translate that knowledge into the band teaching environment very effectively. Mrs. Higginson, with no musical degree but a very high level of talent and a lot of teaching experience, was

arguably the most successful of any music teacher in Dover's history. From all this, it seems possession of a university degree may be neither a prerequisite for success nor a guarantee of it.

Incompetence in music instruction can be a cause of failure. While Mr. Watson had experience teaching science and math, he admitted that he was not a very good music teacher, though he tried his best and had some success.

Incompetence in classroom management may be a stronger predictor of failure. Both former students and administrators indicated that Mr. Speer and Mr. Clark both had extreme difficulties with management issues. In Mr. Speer's case, it was his extremely strict demeanor that backfired and ruined his rapport with the students. Mr. Clark had the opposite problem: he had great rapport with the students but was so casual with them that he couldn't exercise any discipline over them. In both cases, chaos bordering on anarchy became more and more common as the school year progressed.

Mr. Fenton and Mrs. Higginson demonstrated both musical competence and effective classroom management. Mr. Fenton established a reputation as a musical expert on all of the instruments, challenging the students to exceed his ability level. He was able to form effective relationships with students such that they trusted him and followed him. He managed his classroom effectively enough to rehearse and perform appropriate repertoire, particularly during his initial years in the school system.

Mrs. Higginson's case was very similar. She had established her musical expertise in the community through years of church and community service, so she had secured the respect of the students and parents from the beginning. She modeled excellent musical technique in class, playing in front of the students often. She also developed an effective classroom atmosphere where students respected her authority, yet she also developed personal relationships with many

of the individual students. These two successful teachers were able to develop quality music programs, which I am certain encouraged them to continue in their positions for many years. Success often breeds more success.

Willingness to share students. A key factor for creating a positive school atmosphere and successful music program for these teachers in a rural school system was learning how to share students. With a school population of less than 150 students, there were not enough students to staff multiple sports teams, clubs, and music ensembles without significant overlap of members. It was not uncommon to find individual students involved in three or more extracurricular groups at once.

The period of greatest school-wide success at Dover High occurred when coaches and music teachers cooperated well. Coaches were willing to be flexible as they allowed players to participate in music concerts; music teachers were willing to schedule those concerts at times that would interfere the least with sports activities; and all group leaders were careful to not demand so much of any student that one of the other programs suffered for it. This respectful balance created an era of success in both the athletic and musical organizations at the school.

Mr. Speer's case is instructive of what not to do. He came to Dover and developed a strong marching band, possibly the best in school history by several accounts. He then watched all of his work fall apart beginning in October, his third month in the position. That time coincided with the end of the marching season and the beginning of basketball practice. While he had been successful early in the school year, he did not understand the importance of basketball in the school and the dedication of the students had to the basketball teams. During games, he required team members to leave the locker room and play in the pep band during half time, an almost unforgivable trespass against the coaches and players. This quickly soured his

relationship with the coaches, who are very influential in a small, athletically-minded school and community like Dover. Speer's effectiveness as a music teacher quickly spiraled downward to a catastrophic end, finalized by his dismissal from the school during the spring. Not sharing his students with the teams likely cost him his job.

A particular challenge came as students had to make music classes fit in their schedules during school hours. Because of the small student body, most classes were only offered in one section, so a required English class had to be taken the hour it was offered, even if that was the same hour as when the choir rehearsed. For some students, the choice was to take a different type of music class (orchestra instead of choir, for example). This scheduling solution was more likely to work when a variety of music classes were offered at different times during the day, conditions Mr. Fenton sought to arrange.

A real challenge at Dover came when Mrs. Higginson expanded the orchestra program to the high school. While that opened up a wider variety of music classes, students often were forced to choose between band, choir, and orchestra, sometimes with guitar or general music offerings competing for enrollment as well. Mr. Fenton's philosophy was that any music class is a good music class, so while it was difficult to lose good players, he often adjusted his schedule, or allowed it to be adjusted, so that at least some of the interested students could register for band class at any given time. Mrs. Higginson was evidently less flexible, demanding (and often receiving) prime scheduling slots. This allowed more students to be in the orchestra but sometimes caused students to choose orchestra over band, since they were only able to select one of the two classes.

Both Mrs. Higginson and Mr. Fenton tried rehearsing during the lunch hour (during different eras) to maximize enrollment. While this was a sacrifice for students and teachers alike,

it allowed more students to take the class, since conflicts with other classes were minimized or avoided entirely. This is a good example of the ingenuity of the teachers in trying to find a way to share students with all the other programs at the school.

My own experience has been similar to that of these teachers. I have been known to forcefully request scheduling priority from time to time, and my principal has usually been able to accommodate my requests. Sometimes, when a student has irresolvable schedule conflicts, there is nothing that I can do but shrug and invite the student to return to the music program the following year. I created a guitar class partly in response to what I observed from Mr. Fenton: the need to offer some type of music class for students who simply do not like choir or orchestra. Some students whose severe schedule conflicts have necessitated their dropping orchestra have instead selected the guitar class and found it to be a very positive experience. Others chose the guitar class because they simply liked guitar music more than orchestra music. I believe the movement between music classes is perhaps less challenging when a single teacher is instructing all of the classes. There is no feeling of competition between programs, at least in my mind. However, that competition was evidently bothersome for Mr. Fenton, when the students' schedule conflicts forced them to select orchestra as their only music choice.

Positive relationships with administrators. School- and district-level administrators' policy, scheduling, and fiscal management decisions can either hinder or ease a music teacher's job. To some degree, a teacher's relationship with his administrators can affect how he is treated by those administrators.

Mrs. Higginson had an excellent relationship with her elementary school principal, Mr. Norcott. He was supportive of the program when it was first introduced and was willing to help Mrs. Higginson in any way possible. She enhanced that positive relationship as she invited him

into the classroom to participate as a student, which he was very happy to do for several years. At least one of her high school principals, Mr. Norton, also was supportive, though not to the same extent as Mr. Norcott. Mr. Norton's helpfulness may have been encouraged by the example of his children, most of whom participated in her orchestra and excelled as musicians. All of this support must have made teaching much easier for Mrs. Higginson, knowing that she had the full backing of her administrators at both schools.

Mr. Clark had little to say about his relationship with his principal, Mr. Mitchell, who also had little to say about his relationship with Mr. Clark, except that he recognized that Clark had lost control of his classroom and did not invite him back for a second year of teaching. That lack of relationship may have had something to do with Clark's plans: he indicated that he was only planning on teaching in Dover for one year. With that lack of dedication in mind, it is not surprising that he made little effort to develop any kind of relationship with Mitchell.

Mr. Speer had little love for his principal, Mr. Growden, and Growden felt the same towards Speer. As Speer said to me, "I accused him of being against me from the first day he knew me. And he as much admitted it" (personal communication, July 7, 2013). Growden spent much of his administrative time throughout the year dealing with discipline referrals from Speer. Growden evidently tired of this, as he finally told Speer at a basketball game (after Speer referred an unruly band student to him during the game), "I'm sick of dealing with your petty little problems" (A. Speer, personal communication, July 7, 2013). An adversarial relationship like that would make working at a school very difficult, especially when combined with the other problems Speer faced with students and parents. It is no surprise, then, that he left after one year.

Mr. Fenton's relationship with his principals was more complicated. Some of them were very supportive and even friendly. For example, Mr. Calder specifically mentioned that Fenton

became a good friend. In my interviews with Fenton, several principals received no mention at all, but he did make particular mention of Mr. Norton (the same principal that was so supportive of Mrs. Higginson's orchestra program). Fenton did not disguise the fact that they did not cooperate well. It is difficult to know why Fenton's relationship with Norton was so negative, as both parties guarded most of the details. Mr. Norton, in his interview, never spoke ill of Fenton, even softening the details of things that I had been told by others were problems during his tenure. Fenton had nothing good to say about Norton, though, saying their relationship had been soured early on when they were both classroom teachers. It then continued to degrade once Norton became principal. My data suggest that this was possibly because of Norton's favoritism towards Mrs. Higginson.

Both Mrs. Higginson and Mr. Fenton maintained healthy relationships with the district-level administration during their tenures. Fenton often remarked how helpful his long-time superintendent, Lance Hawkins, was. Hawkins personally approved most requisition requests, so he had the power to help or hinder any particular program in the district. Fenton mentioned that Hawkins was very helpful in approving the purchase of needed improvements like new instruments and even an acoustical upgrade to the music room. This relationship was built on a trust that Fenton was careful to maintain: Hawkins was helpful in approving requisitions, but with the understanding that Fenton was not going to ask for unnecessary purchases.

Mr. Fenton did not say anything about later superintendents. It is possible that as he put less time and energy into the music program he did not feel the need to seek out additional funding for the program. "Fentonizing" instruments became more common as he kept instruments working through innovative repairs rather than through replacement that would have required district purchasing approval. Without the need for those approvals, he may not have felt

motivated to build those relationships with district administrators. Additionally, more and more responsibility was given to school principals and subordinate administrators within the district office, eliminating any direct contact a teacher would have had with a superintendent.

Mrs. Higginson's hiring was the direct result of a district business manager's influence. Kurt Philipson wielded his fiscal powers to create the orchestra programs in both Dover and Hillcrest. After the program was started, he was not able to help out much more in terms of capital investment in instruments, but made sure the program continued and that the teachers were paid.³⁹

I learned the power of positive relationships with district administrators as I read more of these teachers' experiences. I have a good relationship with our business administrator on similar terms as Mr. Fenton's: I only spend what I need. I heed Mr. Fenton's advice carefully to keep that relationship healthy.

Willingness to become part of the community. Ethnologists often describe an "insider" vs. "outsider" point of view when doing field research (Nettl, 2005, p. 154). My research into the program at Dover High School indicated to me that the same dichotomy may be true of teachers coming into a new program or school. In my opinion, this was the most decisive predictor of whether or not a teacher would stay in Dover: did he or she want to become part of the community—or not? While all the music teachers shared the common trait of coming into Dover

³⁹ On a side note, Philipson was a wise politician in how he created the orchestra program. He was mostly interested in helping his own children (who attended school in Hillcrest). Regardless of his personal motivation, he was careful to start a parallel program in Dover. As was mentioned by several participants, there has been a long-standing feud between Hillcrest and Dover in regards to preferential funding and treatment by the district administration. Philipson may or may not have known about this conflict when he began, but he was good to provide equal treatment to both schools. Ironically, the Hillcrest program has never really thrived, though it is still active. Even though Hillcrest High has nearly twice as many students as Dover High, the orchestra participation numbers have been about equal through the years. I would attribute this to the excellent program created by Mrs. Higginson, to administrative backing from principals, and to overwhelming community support and high expectations in Dover.

as outsiders, their experiences varied greatly depending on the effort each made to become an insider.

Fenton moved into the Dover area after growing up in a town that was very similar culturally. He was a member of the same church as the majority of Dover community members. He learned how to fit in with the community quickly and made a conscious effort to become a part of the community. As a result, he was accepted by people in town and felt comfortable living there. In the end, he never moved away, even after retiring. While he did not always agree with many of the local viewpoints, both political and religious, he did his best to stay friends with his neighbors.

Higginson was also from a town similar to Dover. She was a member of the same church as most of the community members. When she moved to Dover as a young lady, she met and married a local rancher, connecting her permanently to the community. She was cut from a different cloth than many of the locals, with an air of sophistication not commonly seen in Dover. However, her community service in the town and church congregation endeared her to the community and secured for her a place of high respect among the people. While a few individuals may have considered her somewhat prudish, none denied her musical ability or her dedication to her music students. She died in Dover as an honored citizen.

Clark came to Dover after growing up in a culturally similar town in the same state. Unlike the previous two examples, though, Clark was not religious at all, which isolated him from many of the cultural events held in town. He was also unmarried, and with few opportunities for courtship in such a small town, he spent much of his free time away from Dover. The friendships he made in town were with students rather than adults. He really made no

effort to try to fit into the community and had little desire to continue in the teaching profession. He only lived in Dover for one year.

Speer had an unusual personality that made his chances for success in Dover much less likely. He did not relate well with others and did not seem to have any desire to cultivate social relationships with others in the community. While he was a member of the majority religion in Dover, he was a convert to it and did not hold to as orthodox a practice of it as most of the people in town. Additionally, he was apparently unwilling to adapt his teaching practices to the expectations of the community members, nor respect the athletic traditions of the students, coaches, or community members. All of these things combined together to make the latter half of his one year in Dover a miserable experience for all involved: himself, his administrators, his colleagues, and his students.

All four of these teachers had very different personalities and had very different experiences in Dover. Those who succeeded made an effort to become insiders by participating in community events and trying to become part of the culture. Those who failed to thrive struggled in great part because of a lack of effort or desire to do so. It is possible that they may not have recognized the importance of trying to assimilate into the community in order to find lasting success in such a small town. Several of the former students, teachers, and community members reported these same conclusions from their own observations over the years.

My own experience has been similar to that of Mr. Fenton. As I tried to join the community, even when it meant getting outside of my comfort zone (e.g., learning to hunt, fish, and raise livestock), I found that I was more accepted by others in the community, including my fellow faculty members. Much like Mr. Fenton, I one day recognized that I was now a part of the community and had no desire to ever leave. I had gone from “outsider” to “insider”. The

recognition that I am not leaving any time soon helps me focus on cultivating meaningful relationships with others in the community, since I will have to live with these people for many years to come.

Variety of Class Offerings

Besides discovering some of the conditions that helped teachers stay in Dover for extended periods, I discovered other practices that seemed to help students and teachers find success in Dover. One was that students appreciated having a wide variety of music classes to choose from, allowing them to match their coursework to their own musical interests.

Mr. Fenton apparently had some flexibility in selecting his class offerings each school year. Junior and senior bands were mainstays of the program, as was the chorus, but occasionally he could offer a general music class or a guitar class or even a music theory class. Sometimes he taught one grade at the elementary school and some years it was two classes. Additionally, he taught private music lessons and group guitar lessons outside of school hours, reaching an even broader population of budding musicians, including adults.

When Mrs. Higginson added two orchestra classes to the musical class offerings at the high school, it began to stretch the school resources too much. Staffing a band, a choir, and an orchestra required at least some sharing of students, which was not always possible based on the school's schedule and graduation requirements, especially after those requirements became more stringent in the late 1980s. As the orchestra's popularity grew, it slowly displaced the band, since there simply were not enough students willing or able to participate in both.

As the music program has evolved under my direction, I have tried to apply this principle of balance between variety and depth. I found a choir and orchestra combination to work well at the school, which I expanded to include guitar after speaking with Mr. Fenton and hearing of his

success with the course. Guitar and chorus participation do not require the long-term study that orchestra or band instruments do, yet can still be very rewarding for the students. I have debated for several years whether or not to reinstate a band program at the school. This study has persuaded me to not do so, as I feel it would dilute my already-small program beyond what would be musically viable.

The Value of Elementary Music Instruction

The importance of music study in the elementary school grades, especially in a situation where private instruction is not common, cannot be overstated. Mrs. Elliot helped the performing ensembles in immeasurable ways by singing with and teaching basic instrumental skills to the elementary students. It is a difficult challenge to reach any level of proficiency with students that do not have private instruction and lack the time to practice outside of school because of other extracurricular activities. Having well-prepared beginners, thanks to a program like Mrs. Elliot's, made this achievable.

I found it interesting that Mr. Fenton and Mrs. Elliot apparently never coordinated their teaching efforts, though Fenton's high school chorus program appeared to parallel Elliot's elementary singing instruction. It seems that Fenton's elementary band benefitted from her instruction at least indirectly, but possibly could have benefitted even further had there been more communication between them. Neither ever mentioned anything about correlation between their programs. I never found evidence of Mrs. Elliot working directly with Mrs. Higginson, either.

Mrs. Higginson capitalized on the availability of fractional-size string instruments to start orchestra students in the fourth grade. She also benefitted from administrative support and

scheduling flexibility that allowed and encouraged her to do so.⁴⁰ In the long run, the design of the elementary orchestra program allowed students nine year of study with Higginson. That length of time allowed them to hone their skill to a much higher level than otherwise might have been possible.

The pioneering orchestra work done in the Dover schools by Mrs. Higginson still influences my work today. I am able to teach orchestra beginning in the fifth grade because of the precedent she set. My interview with Mrs. Elliot inspired me to redouble my efforts to instill a love of music in the youngest elementary students. I recognized in her former students a love of music making that was first kindled by her when they were young children. I have determined to do my best to provide similar experiences to my students in the first years of elementary school by teaching meaningful, enjoyable lessons to the K-3 students at DES. I have resisted proposals by my high school principal to teach at the high school full time, buoyed by the results of this study regarding the effectiveness of a comprehensive K-12 music program.

The Importance of Community Visibility and Meeting Community Expectations

Mr. Fenton made every effort to keep his music students in the public eye, especially outside of the concert hall. Performances included community events, parties, and church services. He felt this increased visibility was good for the students and the program as a whole. Fenton indicated that there was a certain expectation from the community that music students be performing at these kinds of functions whenever possible.

The marching band and pep band were the most visible elements of the band program. Younger students were drawn to them, probably at least in part because they had seen them long

⁴⁰ She was retired and only teaching part time, so she could teach at any time of day that was convenient for the schools, something Mr. Fenton could not do with his full-time status. He was only able to teach at the elementary when he was not scheduled to teach at the high school.

before they entered the sixth grade, as basketball games were community entertainment events where families would come weekly to watch the games and hear the band. Again, there was an expectation that the band would perform at the games, as it was part of the entertainment package for the night. There had been a band at the games since at least the 1950s, so the standard had been set for many years. To this day, I still have people asking me if we will ever have a band for the games again. Interestingly, there is never any talk of people missing band concerts. I believe these observations demonstrate how the community members interacted with the band in the past: most heard them in the gymnasium as part of the sporting environment, not the auditorium during a formal concert.

Mrs. Higginson often involved students in community performances as well. This emphasis on sharing talents through musical service impacted several of my participants and taught them the value of using talents to make others happy. Mr. Norton commented on the usefulness of string instrument playing in the community and how orchestra students could play in church and at family parties. I gathered from others that there was a certain expectation that students would play in church. Mrs. Higginson often arranged for those performances and would even play with the students. Fulfilling these community expectations likely helped her garner the support she needed from the community when faced with scheduling or funding problems.

Both teachers also made an effort to involve community members in their programs. Both involved adults from the community in their ensembles, and both included community members in their concert programs. This made the concerts more of a community event than a school event, which in turn increased attendance and support.

I have struggled to increase community involvement in and exposure to my music groups. Concerts are usually only attended by families of performers. Because of what I have

learned through this study, I have made a goal of identifying and inviting community members to participate in our concerts. I also hope to find or create more opportunities for my students to perform at parties, events, and worship services in our community. With so much evidence supporting this approach, I feel it will be worthwhile.

Extra-Curricular Music Making

Along the lines of making community music, Mr. Fenton and Mr. Clark both helped budding musicians form “garage” bands that practiced and performed outside of school hours. These bands rarely included any of the instruments taught in the classroom, as they were more rock and pop ensembles (guitar, electric guitar, bass, drums, keyboards, etc.). These teachers did not feel threatened or put off by these bands, but actively coached them and provided a place for them to practice and perform. I suspect this support from both Fenton and Clark was rooted in their own former experiences as guitarists. Members of those bands enjoyed their interactions with their teachers in a different context from their peers and were appreciative of the help they were given. The bands often performed at school assemblies and dances and were sometimes invited to perform at school band concerts as well.

I did not ever hear that Mrs. Higginson helped create any extra-curricular student groups, like an informal string quartet. She helped organize small groups for community performances, but it appears that most of them were ad hoc ensembles.

Because of the reports I heard from participants, I have tried to cultivate extra-curricular ensembles. This year, I have a few students in my guitar class that have formed a rock band to play at some of the basketball games in the coming months. I am excited for the opportunity to coach them. I would like to see students form their own string ensembles as well, but have not found success yet. It is as though they are dependent on me to provide direction for them, since

that is how it has always been in orchestra class. Throughout the history of Western music, there has been a strong precedent for casual string ensembles, but not at this school. I need to help students become independent enough to do so. This is something for me to work towards.

Expecting Excellence

There was a marked difference in the level of expectation between Mr. Fenton and Mrs. Higginson. Mrs. Higginson expected excellence at all times, both in rehearsal and in performance. That often meant learning only a few pieces of music but polishing them to a high level. Mr. Fenton seemed to accept “good enough” as a polish level, which allowed the band to prepare a wider variety of music for pep band performances. This decreasing level of expectation became more apparent in the later years when musical quality in the band began to decline rapidly. This contrast was noted by several of the participants, including parents, students, and community members.

As Justin Lambert pointed out, the musically-serious students were quite conscious of this difference between the programs. Those who were more musically motivated mostly chose to take orchestra over band. Lambert said that he didn’t care for the overly-relaxed attitude in the band but that he stuck with band because he liked playing the clarinet. He felt like he got much more satisfaction out of the orchestra, though (personal communication, July 15, 2013). Several other participants felt the same, saying, in effect, that the band was just a place to “goof off”, whereas the orchestra was where real music was made.

Mr. Fenton felt like he was trying to strike a careful balance with his level of expectation. He needed to keep the band room atmosphere relaxed enough to attract students who needed music in their lives (which in his mind was everyone) but didn’t want to work for years and years to achieve the polish Mrs. Higginson sought. At the same time, music selections needed to be

challenging enough to retain the more musically-motivated students. The data suggest that Fenton erred toward an excessively relaxed atmosphere, especially as his years at the school progressed. This caused a decrease in band enrollment. However, Fenton claimed he was still able to get some students into a music class that many never would have taken otherwise, which in his mind was a success.

I have struggled with these same issues in my classes at Dover. Most of my students do not have the time or the desire to invest in the necessary home practice to reach a high level of performance. Most are recreational players who enjoy making good music when it fits their schedule (which means during class time). While I would love to prepare music on the level of, say, Mozart string quartets, most of these students are very happy with simpler arrangements of light classics. When I have pushed harder to raise musical standards, some have not re-enrolled in orchestra the following year while others have remarked on how rewarding the challenge was.

Mrs. Higginson's example indicates to me that, at least during the time period in which she was teaching, higher expectations were rewarding enough to recruit and retain students in the program while the more relaxed approach in band led to its demise over time. Students' perceptions may have changed in the intervening years, but I believe they are still similar enough to be comparable. I plan to continue expecting more refinement of my ensembles' music, with the hopes that the aesthetic reward will be payment enough to attract them back the following year. I do not expect this to happen overnight, but I hope to encourage and inspire my students toward a similar level of preparation as Mrs. Higginson's orchestras.

Creating Memorable Feelings and Experiences

Most former music students I interviewed struggled to remember day-to-day routines and experiences from their time in the music program. However, most of them remembered their impressions of their overall experience in the music program, regardless of whether they participated for their entire school career or only for a part of it. A typical response was, “I really liked band.” Some students also recalled particularly unique or poignant experiences they had as members of the music program and were excited to report them to me.

These reports demonstrate the importance of creating a positive atmosphere and experience for music students. Rhoda Elliot’s case was revealing. Every student I interviewed immediately replied with a comment such as, “I loved music with Mrs. Elliot!” or, “She was so nice!” As far as I could determine, she was universally adored by her students and fellow staff members. However, when pressed for details about their specific experiences in the classroom, few could generate any.

Quite a few of the participants remembered special or unique performances or other events, like performances in unusual locations, or with special people, or when they were featured as a special number on a program. These are performances I could easily replicate. It would not be hard to arrange for a unique performance venue or to invite students to prepare and perform a solo or small ensemble number for a concert. If these ideas were implemented in a positive way, it would likely have a lasting impact on the students.

I now recognize my role as one responsible for creating a positive atmosphere in which my students may experience music. If I can cultivate a love for music among the elementary students like Mrs. Elliot did, I expect that my overall success in the upper grades will improve. I also hope to instill a life-long love for music in my students, regardless of whether or not they

continue in the ensemble program. That love of music can also result from the experiences and atmosphere I provide in their formative elementary school years, before they ever participate in an instrumental ensemble.

Helping Students Feel Successful Quickly

Learning to play a band or orchestral instrument well often takes years of study and practice. In my experience, it seems that, as a profession, music teachers are often looking forward to having good players in the future rather than looking for immediate success in the present. Two of Mr. Fenton's students mentioned how he led them to feel successful very quickly. Rather than focusing on all of the mechanics and the processes of playing an instrument, he simply handed them an instrument, provided some basic instruction, and helped them begin playing right away. Most students didn't remember anything more than that, but the impression they conveyed was that each enjoyed the feeling of success coming so quickly. I was surprised at the consistency with which various students related this experience. It must have made an impact on them.

I can do more to foster the same feeling of success with my beginning students. Some years I have perhaps focused excessively on making sure that position was perfect before teaching how to play any notes. Michelle Taylor mentioned that Mrs. Higginson was very strict about students using good form (again, an interesting detail to recall). Perhaps Mr. Fenton's approach is worth exploring: let the student realize some success, then come back and correct form later. If that is what stood out in the memory of some students, maybe I can overcome my fear of creating bad performance habits in students enough to employ strategies yielding more immediate and motivating success.

Importance of Personal Relationships

Many of the former music teachers were able to recall specific student names, even after many years. Mr. Fenton was even able to state their graduation years quite accurately. Mr. Speer and Mr. Clark remembered several students even after having been away from the area for more than 30 years. It seems to me that for these teachers, the individual people were critical—and meaningful—parts of their memories, whether good or bad.

Mr. Fenton seemed to make an effort to cultivate relationships with many of his students. He was open and frank with them in class and was willing to keep an open door for them after hours. Those experiences eventually led him to school counseling later in his career.

Mrs. Higginson made an effort to make her students feel loved individually. She found out what their interests and needs were and tried to find ways to make connections with them. For one student, she provided a cello case in exchange for housework, knowing the student's family was economically disadvantaged. For another, she sometimes talked about the local professional basketball team instead of drilling on scales during a private lesson. Many students came away feeling they were special in her eyes.

Three of the teachers studied here appeared to make an extra effort to be human in the eyes of their students. Mr. Fenton did so by discussing with his students things that were important to them. Mrs. Higginson, who often was serious in preparing for performances, relaxed afterward during the parties at her home. Mr. Clark played *Dungeons & Dragons* with his students. I believe that humanization helped students develop better relationships with those teachers because they saw their teachers as being similar to themselves.

I can improve my ability to focus on the people instead of the program. Most of the participants I interviewed discussed at length what was important to them, even years after their

involvement in the music program. Most participants focused especially on the people met and relationships formed as a result of their involvement in the music program. The experiences related by the participants demonstrate to me the value of cultivating similar relationships now with my students.

Long-Term and Long-Range Influence of a Good Music Teacher

I was pleasantly surprised by how many people were very willing to speak with me about their music experiences in Dover. It quickly became evident that the school music teachers made a permanent impact on their students—for good or for ill. The teachers who spent the time and effort to share music with their students are revered while those who were not as caring are derided to this day.

A most interesting discovery was how geographically far-reaching the influence of a good music teacher can be. I discovered this after interviewing Kurt Philipson, the former district business manager. His children received their initial musical instruction in a school orchestra in a different part of the state. That teacher's positive influence affected Philipson such that he demanded the district in Hillcrest start a program there primarily so that his own children could continue their musical studies. He became a powerful advocate for a program that has now allowed hundreds of students to have an orchestra experience. It is likely that those students never would have had one otherwise. That unnamed teacher in the other end of the state likely never knew the impact he had when he taught the Philipson children nearly 30 years ago.

This story makes it clear that teachers must be careful and conscious of what they do because of the long-range influence their actions can have. While not every teacher will give birth vicariously to a new program hundreds of miles away, it is likely that students will remember what they experienced, even if they don't remember how to play an instrument. Those

students later will become parents that either will help their own children want to study music, or will discourage them. I have found that my strongest parental supporters were themselves music students who enjoyed successful school music programs. In general, I find that I have a harder time recruiting the children of parents who were studying music when the programs were not thriving.

Music for Everyone

Mr. Fenton's approach to music education was that everyone who had any desire to participate in a musical ensemble should be able to find a home in the program. He regularly provided band and chorus classes and often taught general music classes. He occasionally offered guitar classes and twice even scheduled a music theory class. Because of his philosophy, he supported the introduction of the orchestra into the school, knowing it would satisfy the needs of some of the students.

From what I have gathered, Mrs. Higginson followed this same idea, but to a more limited degree. Occasionally, she chose music that suited the interests of the students, such as a fiddling piece or a cello ensemble, though she still primarily selected traditional string literature. This individualized selection of repertoire helped at least one student stay in the program who was not otherwise interested in playing a string instrument. Even with this flexibility, she was not willing to include students who were not interested in playing in an orchestral style. Her expectation was that only those students who were seriously interested in becoming solid musicians should enroll in the orchestra. All others were effectively invited to register for band or chorus.

Programming choices also affected recruitment and involvement. Mrs. Higginson's orchestras mostly played classical repertoire, with a limited use of popular or fiddling tunes. On

the other hand, Mr. Fenton programmed mostly popular music, thanks to the predominance of the pep band in his program. He did include some concert band selections in the spring, but limited the preparation of such literature until after the basketball season was well underway. The balance tipped even further towards popular music in the band program as the orchestra grew in popularity. I believe he made this curricular decision specifically to give students not interested in classical music more of a reason to register for a band class. This decision probably was also influenced by his own musical preferences, which generally favored more popular styles. The chorus class was also dominated by popular and folk songs. Perhaps that was in an effort to offer balance to Mrs. Higginson's Grace Notes ensemble that was singing mostly traditional-style choral pieces.

The dichotomy between the two groups has caused me to reconsider how I structure my own music program, and I feel a paradigm shift coming for me. I was educated in a high school music program that favored concert band literature. The pep band existed and performed only because of administrative and community pressure on the director, a feeling that was made very apparent by the director who expressed little joy in playing for the basketball or football crowds. That molded my own view of popular music in band: that popular music is inferior to concert music. That notion was continued in my undergraduate and even to a certain degree in my graduate studies.

Now that I have been teaching for several years, I have discovered that not many students are drawn to classical music without some previous exposure to it either at home or in the music classroom. Several students who have dropped my orchestra classes have told me that they don't really like the music. The energy level in the classroom is much higher when we work on the limited amount of popular music that we prepare during the year.

My own musical habits have changed since leaving the university. Whereas I left school as a euphonium-playing classical musician, I now spend most of my musical leisure time playing either guitar or banjo in a distinctly folk and pop style with a small group of friends. I have played my euphonium only a few times since I graduated.

Thus, I am torn by the balance here. Should I offer a wider variety of classes on different instruments to create places for more students to find a home, or should I specialize more, with greater emphasis on ensemble playing? While it is hard to argue with the success demonstrated by Mrs. Higginson's ensembles, I cannot ignore the fact that there were quite a few students who went unserved by her program because they didn't fit into her vision of the traditional orchestra. This project has encouraged me to review my course offerings carefully to see if there are students I could reach better with small modifications or with different types of music classes. I am also considering incorporating more folk and pop pieces into my orchestra curriculum with the hope of attracting and retaining more students and in teaching a better-rounded repertoire. The guitar class I offer has been successful for and attractive to some students that might not have otherwise taken a music class, as it offers a different instrument and a more popular style. The chorus class allows me to teach both popular songs and more serious choral literature. However, I still need to be careful to maintain the strong instrumental ensemble core that has been established over the last several decades. The community values it thanks to Mrs. Higginson's legacy, and I feel a responsibility to maintain it, partly in fear of the outcry that could come from disbanding it. However, another part of me wants to reach out to a wider variety of students through more of a general music approach. Although working on this study has not helped me completely resolve this conundrum, I am gratified that it has opened my eyes

to new possibilities. I have discovered strategies for improving the music program and for better serving the student body in Dover.

Chapter 6: Reflections and Recommendations

The research and writing process for this project has been a multi-year undertaking and has yielded many fruits for me as an educator, as described in Chapter 5. Beyond those insights, I learned through experience some things that may prove useful to future researchers who might choose to undertake a similar project. In this chapter, I outline several of these discoveries. I also suggest recommendations for future research on related topics.

The Research Process

One of the first things I did upon choosing to study the history of the music program in Dover was to explore the archival material available. In the case of the Dover schools, little existed. The most significant resource was the high school's yearbook collection, spanning from the 1940s to the present. Thankfully, the collection had been digitized, making the research more convenient.

To make the yearbook survey most effective, I chose to create a timeline in table format, listing the year, the teacher, the principal, and any pertinent details in separate columns. While this was not a lot of information beyond names and dates, I created a skeleton I could flesh out as I conducted interviews. It proved very useful in helping me understand context and setting during the interviews and also guided my interviews with participants. It was most effective when I reviewed those notes just before conducting an interview so I would be familiar with the time the pertinent time period of each participant. The reader will note that I did not reference the yearbooks at all in Chapter 4. I found that the interviews yielded more useful information than the yearbooks.

Further yearbook research could prove to be an interesting and fruitful field of research. A longitudinal study could be completed, investigating such topics as:

- enrollment trends throughout the years
- years of experience of ensemble members
- whether ensemble members were also involved in other extracurricular activities
- patterns of family participation (including siblings, cousins, parents, and possibly even grandparents)
- instrumentation trends, including gender and family patterns

In retrospect, I feel that I could have used the yearbooks more effectively as an interview tool. Whenever I brought one along or showed other photographs to my participants, the yearbooks often prompted the participants to recall important memories of individuals and events. I shared the yearbooks several times casually with community members passing through my classroom or finding me at work on this project, but I did not do it consistently enough during the formal interview process.

Another research avenue that could be useful for future researchers is the music library in the school. I had planned to have Mr. Fenton come over to the school and look through the music collection with me, in hopes that seeing the music might prompt him to tell stories about particular pieces or things that may have happened while preparing them. I know that for me, certain pieces of music evoke very poignant memories of the rehearsal process and certain performances. I expect other teachers and students might have similar responses. Unfortunately, Fenton and I were unable to meet for this purpose, but I believe it would be worth pursuing in the future.

The Interview Process

I genuinely enjoyed visiting with people to conduct interviews. It was a very pleasant experience most of the time, and nearly all of my participants enjoyed the time we spent talking

about their experiences associating with the music program in Dover. While some were initially uncomfortable with the recording equipment, they soon ignored it and began to talk openly.

One thing I believe would be helpful for future research is to carry some kind of a recorder on my person all the time. This has become much easier with the advent of compact portable electronics. Most phones now have a good-quality audio recorder on them. Along with this capability, a digital version of the required IRB forms could be kept, allowing a researcher to have a participant sign the forms at the time of the impromptu interview. I make this recommendation because of the spontaneous nature of some interviews. Many, many times, a community member would begin talking to me about their experiences in the music program while we were at the store, in the office, or visiting at church. How I wished I could have had the ability to record those conversations easily and ethically! While I was able to use those conversations to ask questions later during a more formal interview, the informal moments were usually much more colorful and I believe much more authentic than the thought-out answers typical of a sit-down interview.

If I were to continue research in Dover, I would seek to interview a wider variety of participants. While I felt my pool of participants was adequately diverse, it would have been interesting to gain a greater depth of perspective from more individuals, providing sharper resolution of the subject matter. In my case, I was attempting to conduct research while working full time and raising a family. A full-time researcher could easily interview many more people in a shorter amount of time.

Another interview tool I would recommend is a group interview. While interviewing more than one person can make transcription very difficult, it could be very interesting to get

different combinations of individuals into a room together and help them discuss their experiences. Possible combinations could include:

- *Former music teachers.* Much information could be gained as they compared and contrasted their experiences with students, administrators, and community members. This could also produce conflict, though, as not all teachers were pleased with their predecessors or successors.
- *Former administrators.* Much could be learned as administrators compared how they worked with music teachers, or how things changed over the years.
- *Former music students.* These groupings could include multiple students from a single year or era or students from a variety of years. I anticipate that once certain stories got started, the details coming from a variety of students could be very interesting.
- *Former parents of music students together with their children.* I believe studying the interaction between parents and children who have participated in a music program could be fascinating, exploring things like parental expectations vs. student perceptions.
- *Former music teachers together with their students.* This grouping would allow for comparing the view from the top down and from the bottom up.

In the course of my study, I did not conduct any interviews like this, but I believe they could have been very interesting. Care would have to be taken to moderate group interviews, since emotions could run very near the surface in cases of conflict between participants.

One difficulty of doing this kind of interview in the past was the challenge of gathering the participants in the same location to conduct the interview. To alleviate problems, technology

now allows for group video conversations over great distances. Any technological challenges could be overcome with careful planning.

I discovered an interesting interview technique in the final weeks of preparing my project. Email was a very convenient way to ask questions and receive answers without the need of transcription. I had several extensive conversations with Mr. Fenton this way. He still is a very busy person and is often on the road. Thanks to modern communications devices, he almost always had access to email and could answer whenever it was convenient for him, even late at night after it would be proper to call someone on the phone. He told me that he preferred the emails to a personal interview, as he was able to create a more coherent answer as he typed than if he were speaking to me in person.

I believe email communications could be an “interview” process worth exploring more by future researchers. It has the advantage of giving the participant more time to think through an answer or look up documentation to guarantee its validity. It also allows participants to carefully choose their words. This can be an advantage and a disadvantage, as sometimes I feel individuals are more candid and honest when they speak spontaneously. It may be easier for participants to concoct a half-truth or to distort events, knowingly or innocently, when provided with time to edit their stories. On the other hand, emails do not need to be transcribed and are very easy to handle in the writing process. This proposed process also eliminates the need to send transcripts back for revision and/or approval by the participants, as they are retained in their email server.

If there is one thing I learned from sad experience in the interview process, it is that dead men (and women) tell no tales. Death has a terribly permanent way of hindering interview-based research. This proved to be the case during the interview process with Mrs. Higginson. Mrs. Higginson was still alive when I began my project. Coordinating interview appointments was

very difficult; it seemed that whenever I tried to establish a time to conduct an interview with her, she was either busy or not feeling well, or it was inconvenient for me. It may have also been that I was somewhat intimidated by her. As was described in Chapter 4, she was a very proper lady with a tremendous reputation. She had created a remarkable and storied orchestra program and was a very talented musician. I believe that I was intimidated by that, as I was trying to carry on the tradition she began—but perhaps not in the same, perfect manner that she would have employed. I had virtually no experience playing orchestral strings before coming to Dover and I didn't feel like I was doing things very well, especially compared with the legacy she had left. Regardless of the reason, I hesitated to speak with her, and missed an important opportunity. I vividly remember the afternoon I was resting on the couch after a long day at school and my wife said, "Uh oh. This is not good." She read of Mrs. Higginson's passing on Facebook, and my heart sank. I knew I had lost a wealth of information with her passing that could never be completely replaced.

Therefore, my recommendation to future researchers is to begin interviewing immediately. I recommend that researchers quickly gain necessary IRB approval, and then start interviewing informants immediately—even if questioning routines have not been fully established. I specifically would advise that the researcher identify older participants or those that are frail or in ill health and interview them first. Follow-up visits can be arranged if needed, but it is impossible to replace first-hand accounts after the eyewitness is deceased.

The Transcription Process

I found the interview transcription process to be very helpful in analyzing data. For this reason, I completed all of my own transcriptions. It was very helpful to keep a notebook to record pertinent points and quotations I found while completing the transcriptions, which made

writing the final ethnography much easier. While the process was very time consuming, it was also very worthwhile.

I would recommend to future researchers that they make a dedicated effort to transcribe interviews promptly. Because of my full-time career as a teacher, it sometimes took several weeks or even months before I could transcribe interviews. I recognize now that had I transcribed more promptly, I may have been able to make better follow-up contact with my participants. This was one of the advantages of the email “interviews” described above: I could analyze them and ask follow-up questions very quickly, something that was much harder to accomplish with the verbal interviews and transcripts.

The Writing Process

The writing process generated many more questions than I had thought of while I was interviewing individuals. Organizing one’s thoughts on paper has a way of doing that. In many cases, I was able to review my transcripts and find answers to those questions. In other cases, I was able to contact my participants and ask them to provide additional insight into the issues I was exploring. Unfortunately, in a few cases, the opportunity had passed and the questions went unanswered.

I would recommend to future researchers that they begin the writing process early, while still engaged in interviewing, even if it is only in an outline form. I believe that had I pursued that course, I would have been more effective in my interviews, as I would have seen the direction of the project earlier in the process.

One curious phenomenon that stopped me from writing earlier in the process was a certain dread I felt about describing these participants that had invited me into their memories. Initially, I had set out to write a history of the music program in Dover so that I could publish it

locally. I believed there was much to celebrate, and I still feel that way. However, I soon discovered that there were some darker elements to the story that were also important—even critical—from a research perspective. Most of the participants I interviewed lived nearby, and many have become friends; I was loathe to convey any seriously negative stories about them that might prove damaging. My research ground to a halt as I grappled with this moral conundrum. I considered ending the project completely and changing my entire research direction. It was then that I was persuaded to modify the project into a case study.

The case study format was very helpful to me and to my subjects. Knowing that everything would remain anonymous helped me to write more freely and completely, not feeling a need to be careful about offending anyone. It also helped my participants respond to questions more openly. As a result, I ended up with a much more complete and accurate description of the music program. However, I realize that I will not be able to publish the finished product and distribute it locally. While the details are anonymized, a local reader certainly would be able to determine the identity of the participants, possibly causing embarrassment—or worse—for my participants and for me.

Other Ideas for Future Research

A possible topic for future research that was inspired by this project is to conduct a descendancy study of specific music teachers. In genealogical research, a descendancy chart shows all of the children, grandchildren, etc., of an individual. In this case, it would be interesting to explore the influence of a single teacher or music program on its students and others. This was inspired by the orchestra teacher that taught Mr. Philipson's children. His program helped inspire Philipson to start a similar program in Dover and Hillcrest. That program has inspired at least one student into the music-teaching profession, and has likely influenced

others. Mr. Fenton has at least three former students who are now working as professional musicians, some very successfully. Many others are musically active because of his teaching and influence. It would be interesting and inspiring to explore this further.

While my project was an historical ethnography, focusing on the cultural interactions of the music program years ago, it would be interesting and informative to conduct a present-day ethnographic study of a music classroom. Many of the same types of topics explored in this study could be replicated or adapted. The data gathered from such a study could be invaluable to a teacher, though I believe it would be difficult for the current classroom teacher to conduct his own study without introducing bias, either intentionally or unintentionally. If the teacher was willing to allow an ethnologist into his classroom, the researcher could study the classroom culture with less bias, though it may be difficult to gain “insider” status in that scenario.

Another topic for future study could be a comparative ethnography—although not necessarily historical—between schools in different socioeconomic conditions. Dover High School is very small in a rural community. Would some of the insights gained from this study be applicable to a suburban school, an urban school, or even another rural school in a different part of the state or country? A comparative ethnography might be able to determine answers to these questions by presenting a wider variety of experiences. Such a study possibly could be approached as a meta-analysis if enough comparable ethnographies were available to compile.

It is my desire and hope that this study provides a model and inspiration for future researchers and music educators. I found it very helpful to my own teaching practice. I am confident that additional future studies of this nature would be a valuable addition to our body of professional research.

Appendix A: Interview Forms

(1) IRB-approved Consent Form

An Historical Ethnography of a Small School's Music Program: A Case Study.

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is being conducted by Robert Lacey at Brigham Young University to determine the social history of public school music education in ██████████, between 1940 and 2006. This will then be converted into a case study rather than strictly a history. You were invited to participate because you participated in or interacted with the music education program at ██████████ or one of its feeder schools during that time.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in this research study, the following will occur: You will be interviewed for 1-2 hours, (if you have more you'd like to share, more sessions may happen in 1-2 hour blocks). The interview will involve questions and dialogue about your experiences relating to the music education program at ██████████ High School. The interview will be audio and video recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting your statements. The interview will take place in either the researcher's office at a time convenient for you or it may take place at a time and location convenient to you. The researcher may contact you later to clarify your interview answers for approximately 15 minutes per 2 hours of interview time. Your total time commitment will be from 2-8 hours, depending on the amount of information you have to share. After collecting information from you, all names and places you reference will be converted to pseudonyms to protect you and the people you reference. The published report will only use pseudonyms for places and people.

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. However, you may feel some discomfort when answering questions about past experiences or when being audio or video taped. If you feel uncomfortable about specific questions, you may choose not to answer them.

Benefits

There will be no direct benefits to you. However, it is hoped that through your participation the researcher will learn more about how cultures develop within music education programs in small schools like ██████████ High School. This may help other teachers improve their music education programs.

Confidentiality

All information gathered in the study will be processed into a format using pseudonyms for people and place names. This will maintain the confidentiality and anonymity of both interview subjects and persons referenced by the interview subjects.

The research data, including the audio and video recordings, will be kept on a password protected hard drive at my home and only the researcher and the Institutional Review Board (a group that protects your rights) will have access to the data. It will be kept indefinitely in case it is needed for future research. You may choose whether or not you would like your files to become available to other researchers, including yourself or your family.

Compensation

You will receive no compensation for your participation in this study.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to yourself.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Robert Lacey by telephone ([REDACTED]) or by email ([REDACTED]). You may also contact my advisor, [REDACTED], ([REDACTED]).

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact IRB Administrator, [REDACTED].

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please check one:

I wish for my data files to remain confidential permanently.

I wish for my data files to be freely available to others for future research. No data referencing living individuals will be released without your express consent.

I wish for my data files to be available only to the individuals listed on the back of this sheet

(2) Sample of Letter Sent to Participants with the Transcript of their Interview

[Date]

Dear [participant name],

Thank you for your time and assistance with my research. Attached is a transcript of our interview on [date]. Please review it for accuracy and make any corrections you see fit. You will note that the transcript matches the recording as exactly as I could determine, meaning you may read stammers or colloquialisms or poor grammar. I am not concerned about that at this point, but am mostly concerned with the accuracy of the contents of the interview.

As we discussed at the beginning of our interview, it is your privilege to redact or edit any sections you do not wish me to use in my study. However, I encourage you to please limit those redactions, keeping in mind that your identity and that of all other parties discussed in the study will be anonymized, and dissemination of the study will be limited. I hope to tell the complete history of the music program here, even though some parts of it may not be as ideal as we would like.

When you finish your editing, you may return it via postal mail or via email. I appreciate your time. If you do not desire to make any corrections, you do not need to send it back. Any transcript unreturned to me will be considered approved and will be available for me to use in my study.

Thank you again for your time and assistance.

Sincerely,

Robert Lacey

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